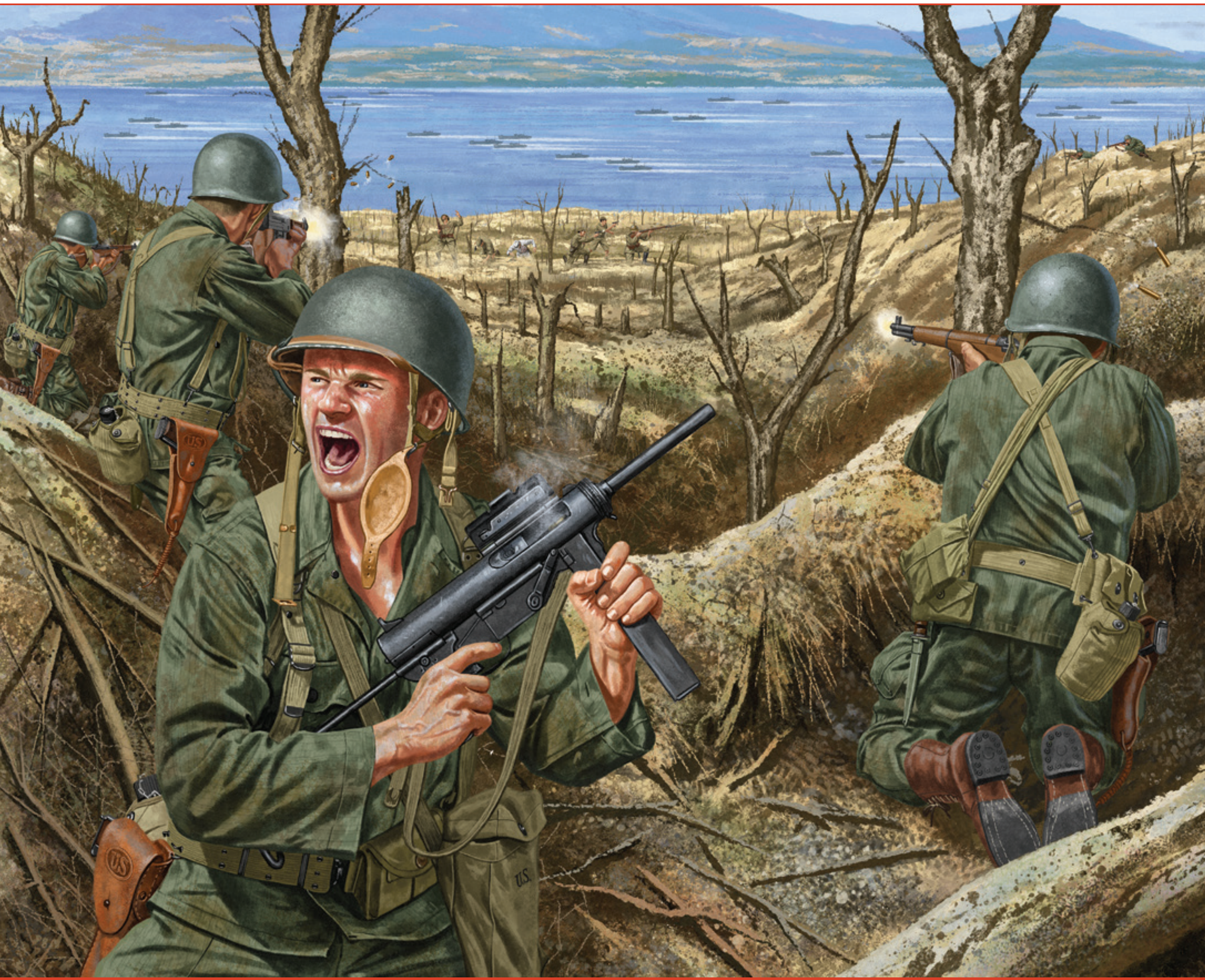
CORREGIDOR 1945

Repossessing the Rock



MARK LARDAS

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHNNY SHUMATE

CAMPAIGN 325

CORREGIDOR 1945

Repossessing the Rock

MARK LARDAS

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Series editor Nikolai Bogdanovic

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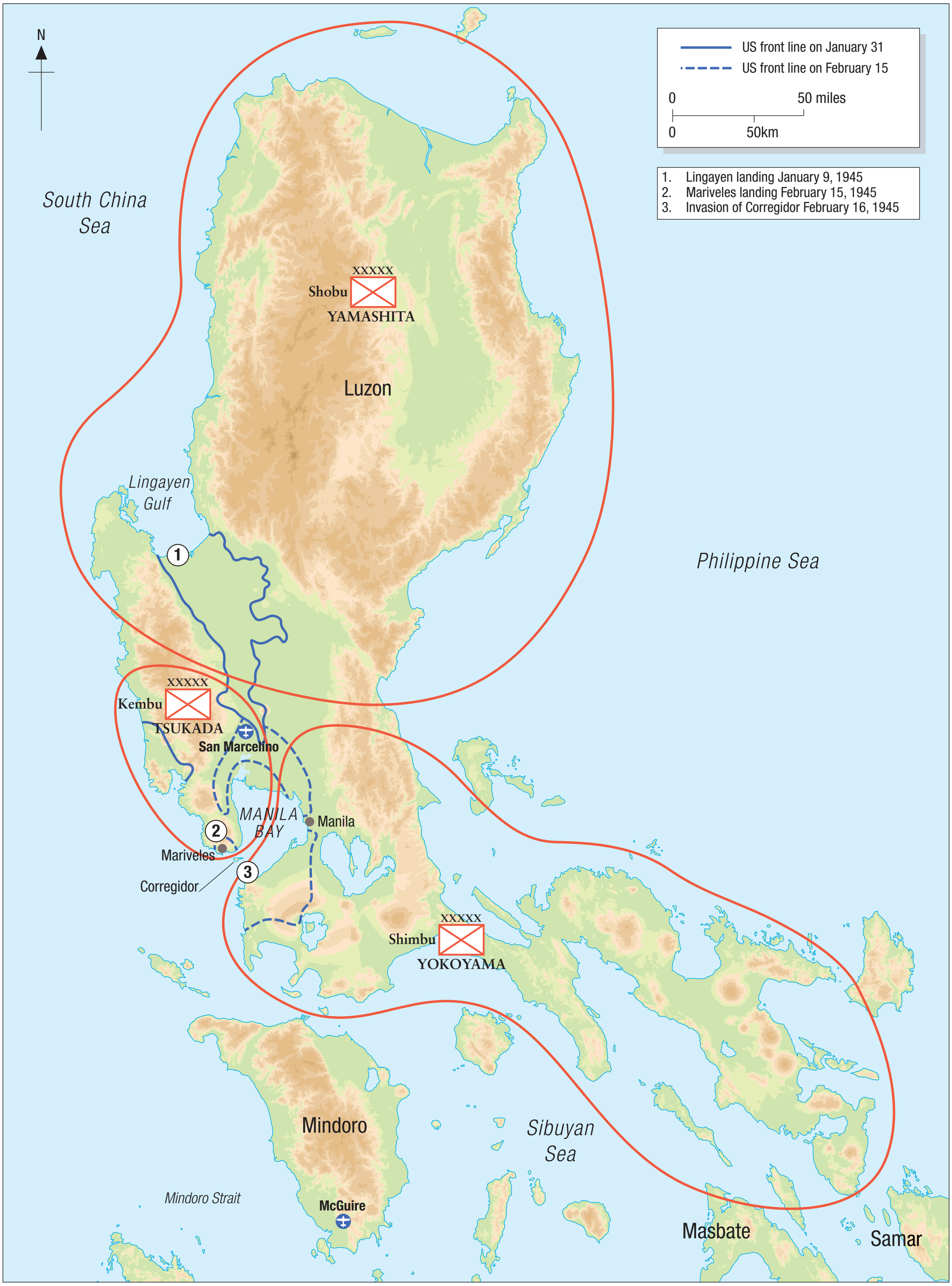
The Philippines, 1945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US front line on January 31
US front line on February 15
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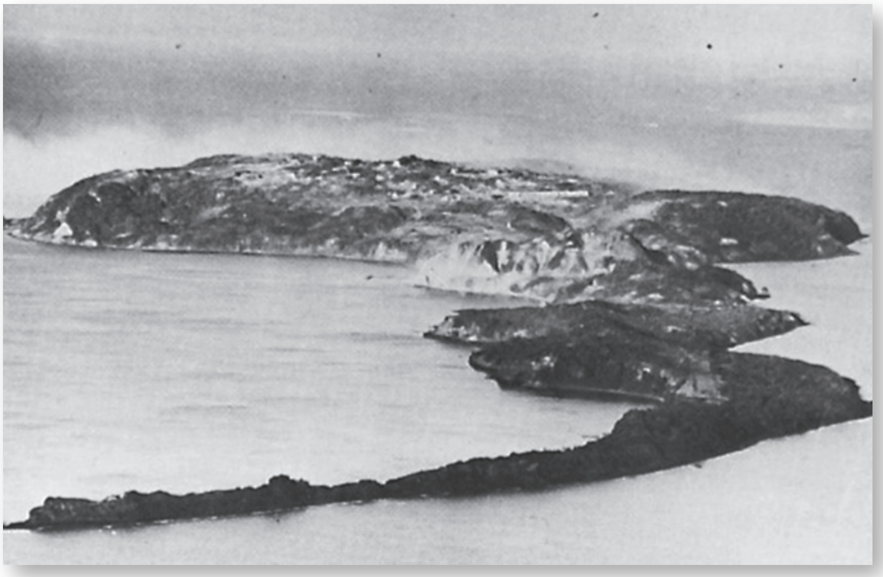
1. Lingayen landing January 9, 1945
2. Mariveles landing February 15, 1945
3. Invasion of Corregidor February 16, 1945
South China Sea
XXXXX
Shobu
YAMASHITA
Luzon
Lingayen Gulf
①
Philippine Sea
XXXXX
Kembu
TSUKADA
San Marcelino
MANILA BAY
Manila
②
Mariveles
③
Corregidor
XXXXX
Shimbu
YOKOYAMA
Mindoro
Sibuyan Sea
Mindoro Strait
McGuire
Masbate
Samar

ORIGINS OF THE CAMPAIGN

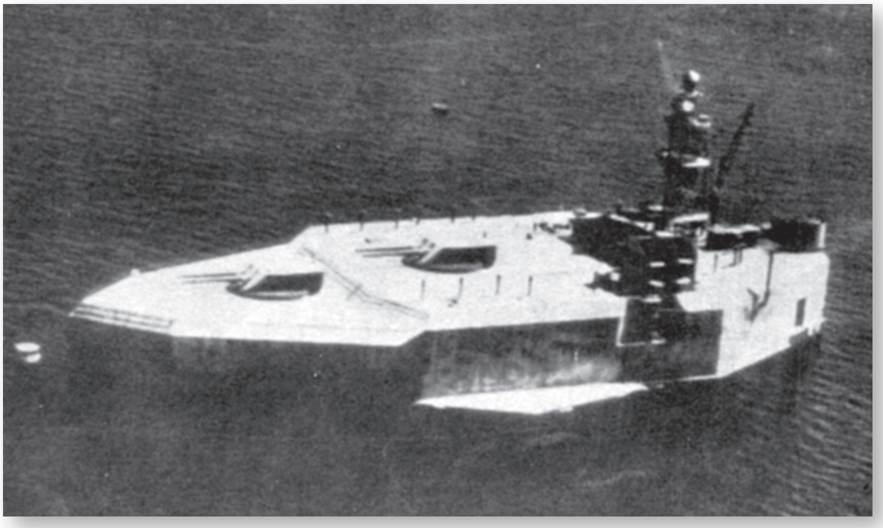
Corregidor Island, commanding the entrance to Manila Bay, was known as "The Rock." It dominated the best approaches to Manila, and the best harbor in the Philippines. Named Corregidor by the Spanish when they conquered the islands in the 16th century, it was a tadpole-shaped island 4 miles long and 1¼ miles wide, that looked like it was swimming out of Manila Bay to the South China Sea. Its round head pointed west, and a long tail wriggled east.

The head dominated the island. It rose nearly 600ft above the water's surface, roughly 1½ x 1¼ miles of uneven mesa jutting up. It was called Topside. The rest of the island shrank to a narrow band of low ground. There were other hills on that stretch of Corregidor, most notably Malinta Hill, in the middle of the island, which rose 390ft.

The area in the waist of the island between Malinta Hill and Corregidor's swollen head was called Bottomside. It held the town of San Jose and the docks used to supply Corregidor. Bottomside was linked with Topside by Middleside, a slope that initially rose gently, then steeply, near Topside. Small rises dotted the tail east of Malinta Hill, with one low, flat area covering half of the eastern quarter of the island, most of which was 100–150ft above sea level. This was Tailside.



Corregidor, viewed from the east. Its resemblance to a tadpole swimming for the South China Sea is obvious. Its location made it the guardian of the approaches to Manila Bay. (DVDIS)



The most extreme makeover of Manila Bay's islands into fortifications was at El Fraile, which was converted into Fort Drum, the "concrete battleship." It is shown here sometime in the 1930s. (AC)

The location and rocky terrain made it an obvious site for fortification. During their tenure the Spanish placed batteries on Corregidor and two other islands in the entrance to Manila Bay, El Fraile and Caballo. They were not enough to deter Commodore George Dewey from slipping the US Navy's Asiatic Squadron, which he commanded, past them on May 1, 1898. He then defeated the Spanish Fleet anchored at Cavite Bay.

The victory gave the Philippines to the United States. The US then fought a seven-year struggle, from 1899 to 1906, to control the islands. It eventually defeated the nascent Philippine Republic to turn the Philippines into a US colony. Some of the insurgents became part of the colonial government. By 1916 the US planned to grant the Philippines independence. In 1934 they set the date for 1944.

In 1904, remembering the opportunity inadequate fortification had given Dewey's squadron, the United States began a major fortification construction project in Manila Bay. Corregidor, Caballo, El Fraile, and Carabao were fortified with state-of-the-art defenses. When completed, the four fortresses provided interlocking fields of fire across the whole of the entrance to Manila Bay.

Corregidor was transformed into Fort Mills. It had six major gun batteries equipped with a total of two 10in. and six 12in. guns, and twelve 12in. mortars; two batteries with a total of five 6in. guns; and a battery of four 3in. guns. All but the 3in. guns were on disappearing mounts. Three additional batteries of two 3in. guns each and two batteries each with a single 12in. gun were added later. An extensive collection of barracks and garrison buildings were constructed, to support the batteries. An airfield was added to Corregidor's tail in the 1920s. Adequate for aircraft of that period, it was too small to be expanded, and was only suitable for light aircraft by 1940.

Caballo Island, immediately south of Corregidor, became Fort Hughes. It was armed with two 14in. guns, four 12in. mortars, two 6in. guns, and two 3in. guns when it was completed in 1914. Carabao Island, near the southern end of the entrance to Manila Bay, was similarly transformed and became Fort Frank. It, too, had two 14in. guns, and eight (instead of four) 12in. mortars. Both islands' guns were mounted on disappearing carriages, with the mortars in sunken casemates. The forts were completed in 1914 and 1913 respectively.

The most extreme makeover was at El Fraile. Started in 1911 and completed in 1914, it became Fort Drum. The Army shaved off the top of the island down to the waterline. They then installed a massive reinforced concrete structure, 350ft long, 144ft wide, and 40ft high. The deck was 20ft thick, with concrete walls ranging from 25ft to 36ft thick. It was considered impregnable, and was topped by two twin turrets mounting 14in. guns commanding a 270-degree arc centered on the South China Sea. Four casemate-mounted 6in. guns guarded the rear arc the big guns could not reach. It looked like a motionless warship and was soon dubbed the "Concrete Battleship." It was better than a battleship: it could not be sunk.

Malinta Tunnel during the 1942 siege of Corregidor by Japan. Despite its impressive fortifications, Corregidor twice proved more of a trap for its defenders than an obstacle to its attackers. (USNHHC)

All four fortresses were designed before the advent of the military aircraft. While no surface warship would be likely to prevail against them, all except Fort Drum were highly vulnerable to aircraft. The disappearing mounts and mortars were in open pits, unprotected from above. As a result, in the 1930s, the Army began digging underground tunnel complexes on Corregidor, Caballo, and Carabao islands.

The largest and most complex series of tunnels was burrowed into Malinta Hill. Started in 1932, it consisted of a main tunnel and 25 lateral tunnels. Dug by convicts, and blasted with condemned TNT, it was largely complete by 1934. The tunnels were lined with concrete, provided with forced ventilation, and fully electrified. An electric trolley ran through the main tunnel. Once the initial 25 laterals were complete, more tunnels were dug. The work continued until December 1941. By then another 23 tunnels had been dug. Its laterals served as barracks, office space, hospitals, and magazines. Several thousand personnel could be accommodated comfortably.

The inadequacy of the fortifications as well as their resilience was demonstrated when Japan invaded the Philippines in 1942. Their guns proved irrelevant when faced with an attack from inside Manila Bay, from shores the guns could not cover. Yet Corregidor held out for almost five months, including a month of intense bombardment in April 1942. Finally, on May 5, the Japanese invaded Corregidor, capturing it the following day. The day after that, Fort Hughes on Caballo Island, Fort Drum on El Fraile, and Fort Frank on Carabao surrendered.

Japan then took possession of the islands. The US garrisons destroyed the guns of these fortresses before surrendering. Japan never bothered repairing the US big guns and mortars. The Philippines were deep within Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, and were in no danger of being attacked. Even without the big guns, the four islands remained formidable defensive positions. Their natural and man-made strengths meant any attempt to take them would be difficult. Nearly half Japan's invading troops became casualties when they took Corregidor in 1942, but Japan believed its forces they could inflict greater punishment on any invader.

Japanese invaders lower the US flag on Corregidor on May 6, 1942. They would hold the island and the other Manila Bay fortifications unchallenged until January 1945. They neglected its defenses for the first two years they held it. (USNHHC)

As 1944 began, it became clear, even to Japan, that their beliefs that the US lacked the will to fight, and that the Philippines were secure, were both overoptimistic. By June, with the US invasion of the Marianas, the Philippines were clearly at risk of reinvasion. The four islands at Manila Bay's entrance again became militarily important. In September 1944 Japan began refortifying them. It was too late to restore the big guns, but they moved a few of their own 150mm guns on these islands, and repaired some of the 6in. and smaller US guns left on the islands.

A flotilla of 70 Shinyo suicide motorboats was sent to Corregidor. Antiaircraft batteries were installed. The garrisons were reinforced. The garrisons also dug tunnels into the rock of the four islands, adding to the prewar tunnels the US had created. While the Japanese lacked the offensive strength the US had with the prewar fortifications, the four islands remained tough defensive positions.

Once the US invasion of Luzon began in January 1945, the islands had to be recaptured from the Japanese. Manila needed to be reopened to Allied cargo vessels. Luzon's ground transportation network radiated out from Manila. It was also intended to serve as a logistical center for future Allied thrusts against Japan. But the four islands, especially Corregidor, had enough artillery on them to make using Manila as a port impossible. The Japanese might not be able to sink major warships, but their batteries could easily sink unprotected cargo vessels, and they remained formidable defensive positions.

The Japanese knew this too. When the Allies finally landed on the shores of Lingayen Gulf, General Tomoyuki Yamashita, commander of the Fourteenth Area Army on Luzon, and all Japanese forces in the Philippines, fell back into a fortified redoubt northeast and east of Lingayen Gulf. He left only token forces on Luzon's central plains and around Manila, intending for these forces to be withdrawn before US forces arrived.

Rear Admiral Sanji Iwabuchi, commanding Manila, went rogue, disobeying orders to withdraw, determined to hold Manila and its seaboard approaches to the death. Holding Corregidor was the key to denying Manila to the Allies. While Fort Drum only had a few 6in. guns, it was viewed as impossible to invade. Caballo would be difficult to attack until US forces controlled Corregidor. Carabao was the most distant island from the Lingayen beachhead, sheltered by geography, but it and El Fraile could be bypassed if Corregidor fell.

The Japanese were ready for an invasion of Corregidor. They felt it had to come by sea. The only terrain suitable for an airdrop was on the tail of the island. That was also the only practical place for an amphibious landing. Why send lightly armed paratroopers there, when heavier amphibious forces could reach it? They prepared a warm welcome for any force arriving on Corregidor's eastern half. They had dug defensive positions into the island's heights on Malinta Hill and the hills of Topside and Middleside overlooking the beaches the US had to use.

There was one problem: the US knew what the Japanese expected—but the US found a way to do the unexpected, and confound the Japanese plans.

CHRONOLOGY

1898

May 1	Battle of Manila Bay gives the Philippines to the United States.

1902

April 11	Corregidor, Caballo, El Fraile, and Carabao islands become parts of the Manila Bay defense system. The Corps of Engineers begins surveying the islands.

1904

September	Construction begins on first gun battery on Corregidor.

1909–14

	Forts Hughes, Drum, and Frank built.

1910

	Fort Mills completed.

1932–34

	First phase of Malinta Tunnel built.

1941

December 7	Japan attacks Pearl Harbor, the Pacific War begins.
December 8	Japan invades the Philippines, landing on Batan Island.
December 22	Japanese troops land on the shores of Lingayen Gulf.
December 24	US-Filipino forces fall back to Bataan.

1942

January 7–April 9	Siege of Bataan.
April 9	Bataan surrenders.
April 9–May 6	Siege of Corregidor.
May 5	Japan invades Corregidor.
May 6	US garrison on Corregidor surrenders. Forts Hughes, Drum, and Frank also surrender upon orders from General Jonathan M. Wainwright.

1944

September	Japan posts elements of the 31st Special Naval Base on Corregidor, Caballo, El Fraile, and Carabao, and assigns a 70-boat Shinyo unit to Corregidor.
October	Allied forces invade Leyte, returning to the Philippines.
December 13	Allied forces invade Mindoro, setting the stage for a January invasion of Luzon.

1945

January 9	Allied forces land on Luzon on the shores of Lingayen Gulf.
January 22	General Douglas MacArthur orders the recapture of Corregidor.
January 23	US Army Air Forces (USAAF) begin aerial bombardment of Corregidor.

US paratroopers of the 503rd Parachute Regimental Combat Team (PRCT) land on Topside on the morning of February 16, 1945. It marked the US return to Corregidor after a 33-month absence. (AC)

February 3	Formal tactical planning for the invasion of Corregidor begins.
February 12	US Sixth Army begins moving into the Bataan Peninsula with elements of the 6th and 38th Infantry divisions.
February 15	US 151st Regimental Combat Team (RCT) lands at Mariveles.
February 15	US Navy conducts naval bombardment of Corregidor, Caballo, El Fraile, and Carabao islands, while US Navy minesweepers clear the minefields around these islands.
February 15–16	Japanese Shinyo boats attack the landing craft in Mariveles Harbor.
February 16	Rock Force lands on Corregidor. Captain Akira Itagaki, Japanese commander of Corregidor, is killed.
February 17	Troops from the 503rd PRCT and 34th Infantry Regiment link up. Rock Force is reinforced by 1st Battalion, 503rd PRCT, which arrives by boat.
February 19	Japanese troops on Topside between Wheeler Point and Cheney Ravine launch a banzai charge assault that is repulsed by the 503rd PRCT.
February 21	The Japanese attempt to blow the eastern entrance of Malinta Tunnel open. They overestimate the amount of explosives needed, killing most of the breeching party.
February 23	Japanese troops at Wheeler Point launch another assault, which is decisively repulsed by the 503rd PRCT.
February 24	The 503rd PRCT launches an offensive against Tailside from Malinta Hill. The 34th Infantry Regiment is relieved by 2nd Battalion, 151st Infantry Regiment, and departs Corregidor.
February 25	A PT boat approaches El Fraile, which is occupied by hostile Japanese, who shoot at the PT boat.
February 26	The Japanese detonate ammunition in Radio Intercept Tunnel under Monkey Point killing 150 Japanese and 52 US soldiers.
February 27	The 3rd Battalion, 503rd PRCT reaches Tail End.
March 2	Corregidor is declared secure. A flag-raising ceremony is held, with General MacArthur present.
March 8	The 503rd PRCT is withdrawn from Corregidor.
March 9	Work begins on clearing Manila Harbor.
March 15	The first ship docks at Manila.
March 18	A platoon from the 151st Infantry Regiment lands on Caballo Island, discovers it is occupied by numerous Japanese, and is withdrawn.
March 31–April 4	Engineers pump fuel oil into the tunnels on Caballo in which the Japanese are hiding and ignite the oil with a white phosphorous grenade.
April 6–7	Engineers pump more fuel oil into the Caballo tunnels and again ignite the fuel.
April 13	US soldiers enter the Caballo tunnels, discover one live Japanese soldier, and kill him when he refuses to surrender. Caballo is taken.
April 13	F Company, 151st Infantry Regiment boards Fort Drum, and with the help of engineers, fills Fort Drum with fuel oil and ignites it. It sets off the 14in. ammunition stored since 1942.
April 14	The USAAF and US Navy begin a two-day bombardment of Carabao Island.
April 16	1st Battalion, 151st Infantry attacks Carabao Island and discovers the Japanese defenders have abandoned it. The battalion takes Carabao without a fight.
April 18	Scouts from the 151st Infantry enter the still-smoldering Fort Drum and discover all of its garrison are dead.
May 1	Manila Bay is largely cleared of wrecks and mines.
May 15	(Approximate) 151st Infantry departs Corregidor, relieved by elements of the 6th Infantry Division.
August 15	Japan surrenders.

OPPOSING COMMANDERS

The opposing commanders of both nations came from highly professional militaries. At the senior level both sets were highly trained, having gone through tough service academies to obtain their commissions and had years of experience, including in battle. At the corps and army levels both sides had their varsity managing the battlefield. Many of the senior commanders had seen combat in two or three wars by 1945. By the start of the Pacific War's fourth year these high-level commanders could be counted on to make competent strategic decisions, and use the resources they had to best advantage.

The militaries of both nations experienced massive expansions in the 1930s and 1940s. A core of service academy-trained officers existed in the field officer ranks, from captain to colonel (or their naval equivalent of senior lieutenant to naval captain). Yet both nations had a large pool of reserve officers filling those slots.

These men had received commissions through battlefield commission, officer candidate schools, or short reserve officer training. There were not enough regular officers to go around. While many would prove excellent, others were wanting. Some could have become excellent officers, but lacked the experience to grow into their jobs. In other cases, the demand for officers led to regular officers that lacked competence being retained and promoted beyond their abilities. In peacetime these men would have been eased out at relatively low ranks. Instead, they were retained because there was a war on.

This problem affected Japan more than the United States in the Corregidor campaign. Japan suffered much higher casualties among field and junior officer ranks than the US. There was greater pressure for them to raise marginally competent men into leadership positions. The US was also on the offensive, which offered two advantages: it allowed good officers to be put in challenging positions, and also allowed duds to be shifted to commands of limited consequence where they might also do some good. The good officers would be slotted into combat commands, while those not up to the challenges of combat received garrison postings.

This difference in field-command quality played a major role in the outcome of the campaign. It was not so

General Douglas MacArthur had commanded Allied forces in the Philippines from Corregidor in 1942. Following the US return to Luzon in January 1945, he ordered the recapture of Corregidor as a precursor to opening Manila's harbor. (AC) much that the Japanese lacked officers of the quality of those commanding US battalions and regiments at Corregidor, but rather holding Corregidor was a low priority. The best Japanese field officers were shifted to the locations viewed as critical, while Corregidor and the other islands at the entrance to Manila Bay were sent what was left.

Capturing those islands was a priority for the US. The units sent—army, navy, and air force—were led by competent, capable officers, the best the United States had. Good leadership at the theater level was important: getting the resources available to where they were needed most depended on this. Leadership in the field was critical to the performance of men fighting at a tactical level. Ultimately, the fight for the Manila Bay islands was a tactical struggle, and it was there the US leadership advantage told.

UNITED STATES

Six US commanders played a critical role in the Corregidor campaign; two at the strategic level, two in support commands, and two on the ground in battle.

In February 1945 **General of the Army Douglas MacArthur** was commander of what was still named the Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA). He was in charge of all activities in the Philippines and the theater from Australia to the Philippines. The recapture of Corregidor was personally ordered by him.

MacArthur was (and remains) a controversial figure. His military talent was significant, but was exceeded by his ego. He came from a military family (his father won a Medal of Honor in the Civil War). Graduating from West Point first in his class in 1903, he quickly rose in rank. He commanded the 42nd Division in France in 1918, then became superintendent of West Point in 1919 and Chief of Staff of the US Army in 1930.

MacArthur retired from the US Army in 1937 to lead the Philippine Army, which he commanded with the rank of field marshal. Recalled to active duty in July 1941, he commanded US and Filipino forces in the Philippines when Japan invaded. Missteps by MacArthur led to a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Japanese. Ordered to Australia while besieged in Corregidor, he left the Philippines shortly before the island's fall. Once in Australia, he took command of Allied forces in the SWPA, and led the drive back to the Philippines.

By 1945, **Lieutenant-General Walter Krueger** was fighting in his fourth war. Born in Flatow, Prussia in 1881, he immigrated to America as a boy. He enlisted in the US Army as a teenager during the Spanish-American War, in which he fought in Cuba. Reenlisting to fight in the Philippines during the Philippine Insurrection, he gained a field promotion to lieutenant in 1901. He, too, served in France during World War I, with the 84th Division. In October 1918 he became the Tank Corps' chief of staff.

Between the two world wars he served in a number of positions, including being one of the few US Army officers to attend the Naval War College. In 1941 he commanded the Third

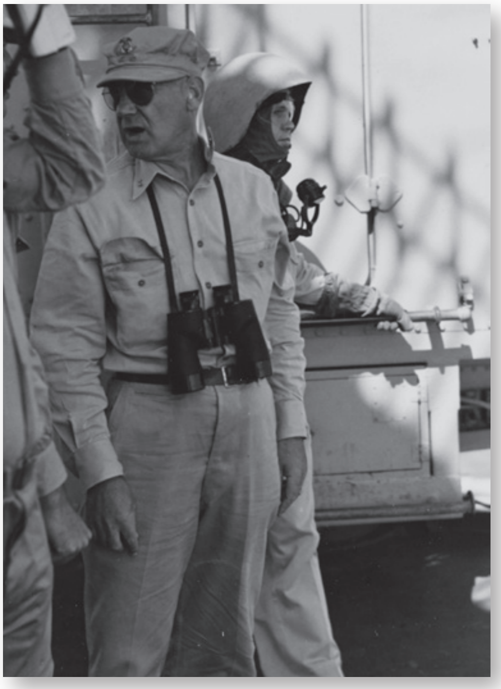
Lieutenant-General George Kenney commanded the US Fifth Air Force during this campaign. His aircraft enabled the invasion, softening up Corregidor before the landing, and providing the 503rd PRCT a ride to the battlefield and air support thereafter. (AC)

Army, leading it in the Louisiana Maneuvers prior to the US entry into the war. Since he was in his fifties when the US entered World War II, Krueger expected to run training commands in the United States. Instead, in 1943 he was sent to the Pacific to command Sixth Army, under MacArthur. Sixth Army was the major field formation on Luzon in 1945.

While Krueger frequently clashed with MacArthur, the latter retained faith in Krueger. In turn, Krueger led Sixth Army commendably. Krueger developed the initial concept behind recapturing Corregidor, and picked the units involved and the officers that led them.

Lieutenant-General George Kenney commanded the Allied Air Forces, SWPA, which provided the air support critical to US success at Corregidor. Born in 1889, Kenney was a civil engineer in New York when the US entered World War I. He enlisted as an aviation cadet in 1917, and was commissioned as a first lieutenant upon completing the program. He served in France, seeing combat as a pilot in the 91st Aero Squadron.

A reserve officer, he remained in the US Army after World War I, receiving a regular commission in 1920. Prior to World War II Kenney served in a wide number of assignments (including a temporary one training infantry officers in infantry tactics at Fort Benning, Georgia). As Assistant Military Attaché for Air in France he observed Allied operations in Europe in 1940.



Rear Admiral Russell S. Berkey commanded the US Navy's forces tasked with assisting the recapture of Bataan, and Corregidor and the other Manila Bay islands. It was an assignment encompassing a wide array of tasks. (USNHHC)

In July 1942 Kenney was given command of the Fifth Air Force in the SWPA. He introduced innovative tactics and weapons after his arrival. He pioneered close air support tactics such as low-level skip bombing and machine-gun fire (strafing) bombers. This turned the Fifth Air Force into an effective killing machine. By 1945 he was in charge of all non-naval air operations in the Philippines. His units were competent and effective.

Rear Admiral Russell S. Berkey commanded US Naval forces during the campaign to capture Corregidor and the other Manila Bay entrance fortress islands. He was born in 1893 in Goshen, Indiana, and attended the US Naval Academy, graduating in 1916. Following this he served aboard the battleship *New York*, assigned to the British Grand Fleet in 1917–18. Between 1920 and the US entry into World War II he served in a variety of roles, including two tours as commander of the Yangtze River gunboat USS *Panay*.

Berkey assumed command of the antiaircraft cruiser *Santa Fe* in October 1942. Promoted to rear admiral in 1943 he commanded several cruiser squadrons over the next two years. This included participating in the Battle of Surigao Strait. In February 1945 he commanded a task group providing fire support at both Lingayen Gulf and Manila Bay. It was made up of Cruiser Squadron 12 and Destroyer Squadron 21. At Manila Bay Berkey also supervised the minesweepers, landing craft, patrol torpedo boats, and other small warships necessary for a successful amphibious landing.

Berkey was more involved with the tactical deployment provided during the operation to retake the islands than Kenney was with the air support. The US Navy's contribution operated on a smaller scale than the that of the USAAF, and was also more closely focused.

Colonel George M. Jones commanded both the 503rd PRCT and Rock Force, which consisted of all US Army ground forces on Corregidor. He was a pioneer in airborne activities, commanding the first parachute battalion organized. (AC)

Colonel George M. Jones III commanded the 503rd PRCT. He also held overall command of Rock Force, i.e. all ground forces invading Corregidor. He provided the tactical guidance for the battle. This included pre-invasion planning, coordinating the combat parachute drops, and running the operation once US troops were on the ground.

Born in 1911, Jones attended the US Military Academy, graduating in 1935. He was commissioned in the infantry, and served in a number of infantry assignments between graduation and 1940. When the US Army began organizing parachute units, Jones volunteered for jump training. Upon completion of training in 1941, he was given command of the 501st Parachute Infantry Battalion (PIB, the first organized by the US Army) which was sent to Panama late in 1941 for jungle training. In February 1942, the 501st PIB was rolled into the 503rd PRCT, and sent to the SWPA.

After participating in a combat jump at New Guinea in September 1943, Jones was promoted to Regimental Executive Officer. After the 503rd PRCT's commander committed suicide, Jones was promoted to colonel and given command of the regiment. He led this unit in a second combat jump at Noemfoor Island in July 1944. When the 503rd PRCT moved to the Philippines, it was assigned to the invasion of Corregidor and Jones was tasked with the planning and execution of the assault.

Lieutenant-Colonel Edward M. Postlethwait commanded the 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment at Corregidor. Postlethwait was tasked with landing his battalion on a hostile beach against an alerted enemy. He then had to establish his command on the beachhead, capture Malinta Hill, and then move up from Bottomside to Topside and relieve the 503rd PRCT. It was a critical command. His contribution was often ignored in favor of the more glamourous role played by the paratroopers, yet he executed his assignments superbly.

Postlethwait was born in 1911 in Warren, Missouri, and attended the US Military Academy at West Point. He graduated in 1937, receiving a commission in the infantry. He served in a number of infantry assignments prior to World War II. This included three years at Fort McKinley, near Manila in the Philippines. In 1940 he returned stateside and joined the 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment as a company commander. He saw extensive combat in the Pacific, rising to the rank of lieutenant-colonel by 1944 and command of the 3rd Battalion. He led the battalion on Leyte and Luzon between October 1944 and January 1945, before it was selected to reinforce Rock Force as the amphibious component.

JAPAN

There were three principle Japanese officers involved in this campaign; two at the strategic level and one at the tactical level.

General Tomoyuki Yamashita was Japan's military governor of the Philippines from September 26, 1944 until he surrendered surviving Japanese forces there on September 2, 1945. He was one of Japan's most competent military leaders. Born in 1885 he graduated from the Imperial Japanese Army Academy in Tokyo in 1905, in the top 5 percent of his class. He saw combat in World War I and in China during the Second Sino-Japanese War.

Prior to World War II he advocated ending the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–45) and maintaining peace with the United States and Britain. Despite this, he was given command of the Twenty-Fifth Army, assigned with capturing Malaya and Singapore. Outnumbered by over 2:1, he completed his conquest in just over two months.

Following the Leyte landings in October 1945, Yamashita concluded he could not defend the Philippines and his best choice was to fight a delaying action in the Luzon highlands to tie down as many Allied forces as possible to prevent their use against the Japanese Home Islands. He ordered all Japanese forces on Luzon withdrawn to this redoubt following the Lingayen Gulf landing. This entailed abandonment of Manila.

General Tomoyuki Yamashita commanded all Japanese forces on Luzon in 1945. Known as the "Tiger of Malaya" for his swift capture of Malaya and Singapore in February 1942, he had ordered Manila evacuated, but was disobeyed by a naval captain intent on dying in battle. (AC)

Rear Admiral Sanji Iwabuchi was sent to the Philippines in November 1944 to command the Third Southern Escort Fleet. Its tasks included the defense of Manila and Manila Bay. He graduated from Japan's naval academy at Etajima in 1915, and became a gunnery expert. By 1942 he was a captain, and commanded the battleship *Kirishima* from April 1942 until it was sunk at Guadalcanal in November 1942. He disobeyed orders to evacuate Manila and join Yamashita in northern Luzon, seeking to avenge the disgrace of losing *Kirishima* through death in battle. This included sending garrisons to the Manila Bay islands. He succeeded in finding death in battle, at the cost of the lives of thousands of civilians alongside him.

Captain Akira Itagaki in practice commanded the Japanese forces on Corregidor, Caballo, El Fraile, and Carabao. Although a naval officer of the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN), who attended and graduated from Etajima, Itagaki had spent his career as a shore-based staff officer. Instead of commanding ships, he managed shore establishments. He was Rear Admiral Iwabuchi's senior staff officer in the 31st Special Naval Base. Since Iwabuchi intended to remain in Manila, he sent Itagaki to command the Corregidor garrison and manage the remaining Manila Bay entrance garrisons.

Command was quite different to the conventional staff position he was used to filling. Regardless, he was a competent commander and did a workmanlike job preparing Corregidor to repel an expected amphibious landing. His inexperience led him to disregard the possibility of an airdropped assault, despite being specifically directed to expect one. He could not see where paratroopers could land, except Kindley Field on Tailside. Should they do so, he felt he could cover an airdrop within defenses to repel an amphibious landing. His mistake was excusable. Even Jones, an airborne expert, initially discounted landing on Topside. However, it proved a fatal error.

OPPOSING FORCES

The opposing forces in this campaign were a study in contrasts. The Allied forces, which were almost exclusively drawn from the armed forces of the United States, were a picked force. They were well trained, and were drawn from coherent units, which had previous combat experience, had previously fought as individual units, and had fought in support of other Allied units. They were a combined-arms force, made up of US Army ground units, US Navy warships, and USAAF aircraft. They were used to working with other branches of service. The soldiers actually landing on Corregidor, conducting the invasion, were trained in ground combat and were first-line troops.

The Japanese defenders were almost diametrically opposite. They had no air contingent. The defense would be conducted exclusively by the garrison of the island. Their seagoing naval component consisted exclusively of small craft, useful only at night. While the ground forces were numerous, they were largely untrained in ground combat. Most were naval personnel or armed civilians. The Japanese commander was an administrator, not a warrior. Their units were composites, thrown together from available resources, often sailors left without ships after the Battle of Leyte Gulf. They had never worked together as a coordinated unit.

Despite the garrison's handicaps, the invaders were not assured victory. The terrain of Corregidor served as a force multiplier for the defenders. The

Japanese landing craft carrying troops to Corregidor during their May 1942 invasion. The Japanese viewed their successful 1942 invasion as the blueprint the United States would follow during its own invasion of Corregidor, and planned their reponse accordingly. (USNHHC) caves and tunnels of Corregidor acted as both refuges and conduits safe from the invaders. Most importantly, the defenders expected to hold the high ground, especially the formidable heights of Topside.

UNITED STATES

The land forces the United States committed to Rock Force (as those chosen for the recapture of Corregidor were called) were some of the best available in the theater. The airborne troops represented an elite. The regular infantry units committed had not undergone special training, but they were battle-hardened and represented the best standard infantry units available to the Sixth Army. Similarly, while the naval and air units used in the battle could not be considered elite or special units, the combat units of the US Navy's Seventh Fleet and the USAAF's Fifth Air Force possessed a uniformly high level of competence.

Ground forces

Ground troops used in this campaign were primarily drawn from three regiments: the 503rd PRCT, and the 34th and 151st Infantry. They were assisted by the 113th Combat Engineering Battalion (CEB). In total roughly 6,000 men were committed to the recapture of the four islands.

The 503rd PRCT and 34th Infantry were Regular Army units, maintained in a state of readiness during peacetime. The 151st Infantry Regiment and 113th CEB were National Guard formations, maintained in reserve status by individual American states during peacetime (Indiana for these two units) and mobilized during periods of national emergency. All were largely filled by wartime-service volunteers and conscripts.

A paratrooper of the 503rd PRCT prepares to use a bazooka to flush Japanese troops out of their position. The men of the 503rd were highly motivated, innovative, and well armed. They were among the best light infantry the US Army had. (US Army)

The 503rd PRCT was a true elite unit. Its members were all men who had completed infantry advanced training. They then volunteered for paratrooper service, attending and passing jump training, and the rigorous physical conditioning that accompanied jump school, before being accepted into a parachute infantry unit. The 503rd had been formed two months after the United States entered World War II by combining three of the four oldest prewar independent parachute infantry battalions. Even by 1945 the core of the regiment was made up of soldiers who joined prior to World War II.

Since its formation, it had conducted the US Army's first combat parachute drop in September 1943 and a second

Soldiers of the 151st Infantry Regiment advance on Carabao Island. Originally a National Guard unit, the 151st had less combat experience than either the 503rd PRCT or 34th Infantry. It was the only unit present during combat operations on all four Manila Bay islands. (US Army)

combat jump in July 1944. It had over two years combat experience before being picked for Rock Force in February 1945. Its men were motivated and used to tough assignments. It was selected for Rock Force over a regiment of the 11th Airborne Division due to its greater airdrop experience.

The 503rd's paratroopers were light infantry. They were intended to take an objective and hold it until relieved. They had no organic vehicles larger than jeeps (none of which were dropped in this operation) and the regimental artillery consisted of a battalion with 75mm pack howitzers and .50-cal. machine-gun batteries. Unless supported by standard infantry or attached 105mm guns and transportation, they could be overrun by armor or standard infantry. When fighting other light infantry, they could not be matched.

The regular infantry units assigned to these operations were not nearly as elite as the parachute infantry, but they were competent, having all the training a paratrooper had except jump training. Their advantages over airborne units comprised organic vehicles and heavier artillery. A standard infantry regiment had a battery of 105mm howitzers, as well as 57mm antitank guns, and 81mm and 60mm mortars. They could also have armor attached. This gave them more hitting power.

The 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry, which provided the amphibious component of Rock Force, came from a Regular Army formation. It began the war largely made up of prewar volunteers. Draftees and wartime volunteers were added to replace combat casualties, but it was a solid unit, proven in combat. Its combat experience started in New Guinea in April 1944, and included participation at Biak, Leyte, and Luzon prior to being committed to Rock Force.

The battalion was reinforced for the Rock Force action, having four infantry companies instead of the more typical three. It had a tank company, antiaircraft battery, and an antitank platoon and cannon company attached

X9A
JUNGLE SKIPPERS
315460

A C-47 on static display at Dyess Air Force Base in Abilene, Texas. It is painted in the colors and markings of the 317th Troop Carrier Group. The "Jungle Skippers" carried the 503rd PRCT on the Corregidor campaign and two previous airdrops. (DVDIS)

from regimental sources. This gave it the firepower it needed to achieve its objectives.

The 151st Infantry was a National Guard unit raised in 1941, prior to the US entry into World War II. It had a mix of prewar draftees and volunteers, largely drawn from Indiana. The regiment had less combat experience than the 34th Infantry, having seen limited combat in New Guinea, before being committed on Luzon. The 151st Infantry played a follow-up role in the Corregidor campaign. The 1st Battalion relieved the 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry late in the recapture of Corregidor, and served as the invasion force at Carabao. The 2nd Battalion invaded Caballo and El Fraile islands.

The 113th CEB was primarily used against Caballo and El Fraile, after initial assaults failed to root the defenders out of deep bunkers. Its men provided demolition services, literally burning the Japanese out of their positions. These were specialist troops, possessing technical skills required for military engineering. They were motivated and competent.

Air forces

The air support provided to Rock Force was a major reason for US success. It was conducted by the Fifth Air Force. At Corregidor it began four weeks before the landing and continued throughout the battle. The Fifth Air Force also provided the transports used to drop paratroopers on Corregidor and resupply them in the opening days of the campaign. While air support at the other islands was not as extensive as at Corregidor, it was significant.

The Fifth Air Force used most of its suite of aircraft to support the operation. Four-engined B-24s softened up the island preinvasion. Tactical twin-engined bombers—the B-25 and especially the A-20—provided preinvasion support and tactical air support after the landing. Fighter-bombers, including the P-51 and P-47, provided close air support to troops on the ground. The Douglas C-47 carried the paratroops and their supplies and heavy weapons to Corregidor. Almost all the Fifth Air Force's combat units supported the operation.

By 1945 the Fifth Air Force had developed into one of the most effective tactical air organizations of World War II. It had been activated in February 1942 with warplanes that escaped the Philippines, and had been in continuous combat since then. It had grown from eight groups in September 1942 to nearly 20 major combat formations and a troop carrier wing by 1945. It developed innovative weapons and tactics, making it deadly against both ground and sea targets.

Its aircrew volunteered for service in the USAAF, and flight status. They were selected based on physical excellence, high intelligence, and mechanical aptitude. They considered themselves among the best the United States had to offer, a generally accurate judgment. Despite rapid expansion (it had 20,000 men in 1938 and 2.4 million by 1944) the USAAF maintained high standards for air crew, who numbered approximately 200,000 by 1945. A long-service outfit like the Fifth Air Force was built around a core of prewar regulars and reservists, but by February 1945 most of its aircrew doing the actual fighting were wartime inductees. These men were backed up by an extensive and competent ground support component.

The 317th Troop Carrier Group (known as the "Jungle Skippers") was assigned the task of dropping the 503rd PRCT. Its aircrews comprised long-term combat veterans, and had worked with the 503rd PRCT on two previous airdrops. They had more experience in combat airdrops than any other Fifth Air Force unit, and owned the confidence of the troops they were to drop.

The US Navy provided a broad range of support during the campaign. This included fire support. This is one of the LCIs the US Navy used for fire support on the invasion's first day. Paratroopers can be seen descending on Topside in the background. (USNHHC)

Naval forces

The naval component for these operations was provided exclusively by the US Navy. Allied navies such as the Royal Australian Navy and Royal New Zealand Navy participated in other Philippine operations, including providing fire support at the Mariveles Harbor landings that immediately preceded the Corregidor landings. They did not take part in the landings to recapture the Manila Bay islands. For those operations, the US Navy contributed a cruiser division and a destroyer division to provide fire support, and an array of auxiliary and light naval units necessary to conduct an amphibious landing.

Landing craft included a mix of Landing Craft Vehicle and Personnel (LCVP), Landing Craft Personnel (LCP), Landing Craft Infantry Large (LCI(L)), Landing Craft Support Large (LCS(L)), Landing Craft Mechanized (LCM), and Landing Ship Tank (LST). In addition, a flotilla of minesweepers ensured the approaches to the landing beaches were clear of mines, and Patrol Torpedo (PT) boats escorted the auxiliaries and stood offshore to rescue paratroopers blown into the water. There was also a number of LCI(R) and LCM(R) rocket-equipped landing craft to provide close-in fire support to landing troops.

The naval contingent added mobility. It served as a force multiplier. A single destroyer possessed the firepower of a US Army regiment's organic artillery. One of the light cruisers assigned to support the invasions carried a main battery of 12 or 15 6in. guns and a secondary battery of eight to 12 5in. guns. This was not quite equivalent to the firepower of a US infantry division's organic artillery, but it was close. Naval artillery could not match the mass provided by USAAF bombers, but it could deliver its fire with greater accuracy.

The US Navy began World War II as an all-volunteer force. Due to massive expansion, it turned to conscription in February 1943. Up until then, it maintained higher standards for recruiting than the Army. After that date, both services used the same standards. By 1945, 60 percent of the US Navy's enlisted personnel were volunteers. They were proficient at their jobs, which were highly technical in nature. Despite Army–Navy rivalries, the US Navy coordinated closely with the Army to support the invasions of the Manila Bay islands.

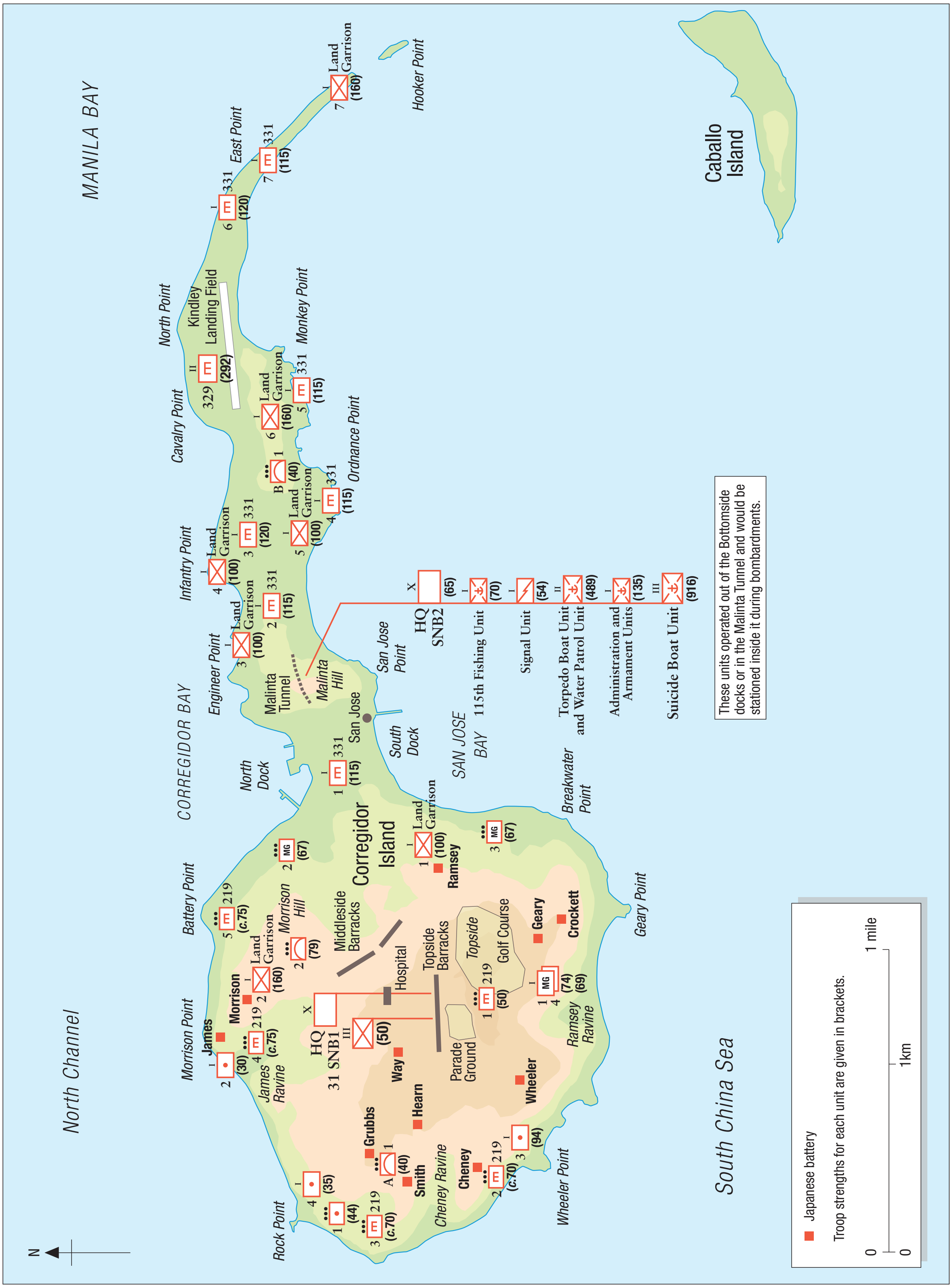
JAPAN

The Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) and Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) forces on Corregidor and the other Manila Bay islands were not nearly as well organized, well supplied, or well prepared as the US forces invading them. The islands had been hastily regarrisoned in the early fall of 1944. Both guns and troops had been sent in an ad hoc and improvised manner.

The guns of the IJA's 3rd Battalion, 22nd Field Artillery Regiment had been split between Corregidor and Caballo. Three batteries of 150mm guns were sent to Corregidor, with the fourth emplaced on Caballo. Several of the 6in. guns at Fort Drum on El Fraile were repaired and manned. The Japanese reportedly repaired one of the 14in guns at Fort Frank, and moved three 100mm guns to Carabao in late 1944. (Carabao was evacuated before the US landing there in April 1945.) This was the extent of the artillery available to the defenders It was enough to make Manila inaccessible to cargo vessels, but not strong enough to withstand a determined bombardment by naval forces.

To protect the batteries, an IJN garrison of just over 800 men was sent to Corregidor and between 250 and 300 men to Caballo. Another 300 to 350 Japanese marines garrisoned Carabao. Corregidor also had four heavy weapon batteries operated by 280 men. While US accounts of the battles to retake these islands refer to these troops as Imperial Japanese Marines, they were almost certainly not Special Naval Landing Force (SNLF, *Kaigun-tokubetsu-rikusen-tai*), the IJN's naval infantry and the Japanese equivalent of the United States Marine Corps. They were more likely drawn from either Defense Units troops (*Bōbi-tai*) or Guard Units soldiers (*Keibi-ta*). Both the latter were formations used to guard naval installations or facilities from ground attack. Defense Units troops also maintained the minefields used to deny hostile naval vessels access to waters such as Manila Bay. Such minefields surrounded Corregidor (and Mariveles Bay), requiring operators. The naval base at Manila would have had several thousand men in such units, so they would have been available

Japanese units on Corregidor, early February 1945


MANILA BAY
North Channel
CORREGIDOR BAY
SAN JOSE BAY
South China Sea
Caballo Island
Corregidor Island
Hooker Point
East Point
North Point
Kindley Landing Field
Monkey Point
Cavalry Point
Ordnance Point
Infantry Point
Engineer Point
Malinta Tunnel
Malinta Hill
San Jose Point
San Jose
South Dock
North Dock
Battery Point
Morrison Point
Morrison Hill
Middleside Barracks
Hospital
Topside Barracks
Topside
Golf Course
Parade Ground
Breakwater Point
Geary Point
Ramsey Ravine
Wheeler Point
Cheney Ravine
James Ravine
Rock Point
Ramsey
Geary
Crockett
Wheeler
Cheney
Hearn
Way
Smith
Grubbs
James
Morrison
7 Land Garrison (160)
7 331 (115)
6 331 (120)
329 (292)
6 Land Garrison (160)
5 331 (115)
B 1 (40)
5 Land Garrison (100)
4 331 (115)
3 331 (120)
4 Land Garrison (100)
3 Land Garrison (100)
2 331 (115)
1 331 (115)
2 MG (67)
1 Land Garrison (100)
3 MG (67)
5 219 (c.75)
2 Land Garrison (160)
2 (79)
4 219 (c.75)
2 (30)
X HQ 31 SNB1
III (50)
1 219 (50)
1 MG 4 (74) (69)
4 (35)
1 (44)
3 219 (c.70)
A 1 (40)
2 219 (c.70)
3 (94)
X HQ SNB2 (65)
115th Fishing Unit (70)
Signal Unit (54)
Torpedo Boat Unit and Water Patrol Unit (489)
Administration and Armament Units (135)
Suicide Boat Unit (916)
N
0 1 mile
0 1km

These units operated out of the Bottomside docks or in the Malinta Tunnel and would be stationed inside it during bombardments.

🟥 Japanese battery

Troop strengths for each unit are given in brackets.

The Imperial Japanese Marines garrisoning Corregidor were not elite shock troops. Rather, they belonged to Guard Units, such as the ones pictured here conducting this prewar landing drill at Cam Ranh Bay, Indochina. (AC)

for transfer to the Manila Bay islands. While trained as infantry, they were garrison troops, not elite assault troops.

Some of the men in these units may not have been trained infantry. The IJN lost many ships at the Battle of Philippine Sea. Many survivors had been dumped at Manila, where they were organized into composite infantry units or used to reinforce understrength Defense and Guard units. The 68-man detachment at El Fraile was made up of survivors from the super-battleship *Musashi*, sunk in the Visayan Sea, near Luzon. (As El Fraile was the "concrete battleship," the decision made sense.)

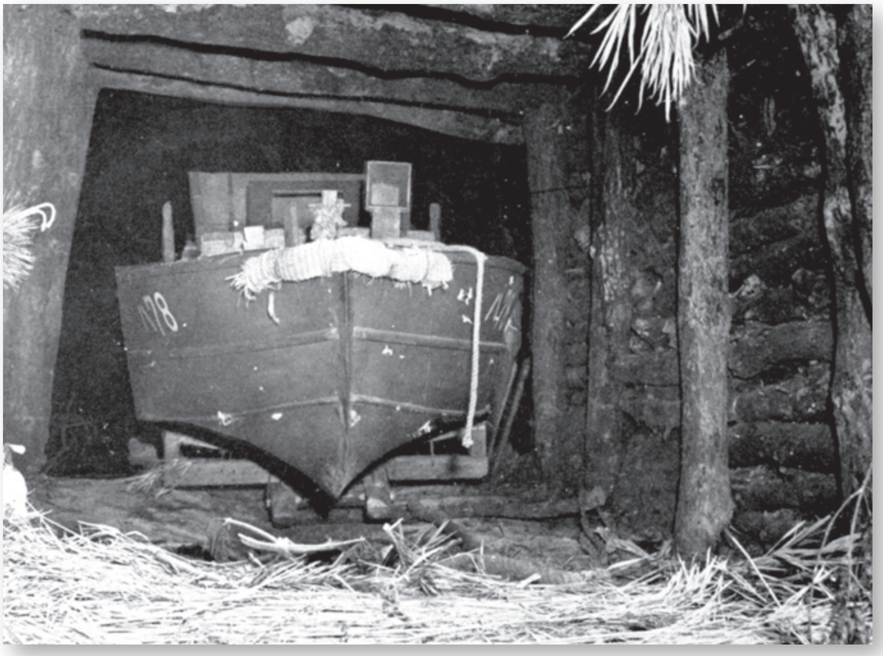
These second-rate soldiers were the best combat troops available to defend the islands. The rest of Corregidor's garrison was made up of auxiliary units. There were three construction battalions; the support and maintenance components for the suicide boats, torpedo boats, and patrol boats stationed at Corregidor; an administrative unit; units to operate the searchlights, radios, and radar; and even a fishing unit used to collect food for the garrison.

The construction battalions were more accurately described as civil engineering units than combat engineers. They had been sent to improve Corregidor's fortifications. There were around 1,450 of these construction workers. Over 300 were civilian laborers. There was also a 220-man lumbering unit at Corregidor, which went to Bataan to harvest timber for use in Corregidor's fortifications, returning to Corregidor to sleep.

Another 950 men maintained the 70 suicide boats stationed at Corregidor, with 480 more keeping the patrol and torpedo boats operating out of Corregidor running. These men were all sailors. They had gone through rudimentary weapons and infantry training as part of their basic training when they joined the IJN, but were primarily mechanics, technicians, and armorers. Of the 100-odd men in the fishing unit, two-thirds were civilian. Another 300 men were administration, supply, maintenance, and medical personnel. Of these, just under 100 were civilians.

In all, the Japanese had roughly 5,100 men on Corregidor, and around 800 on the other three islands. At least that is what Japanese records

The Corregidor garrison included some 70 Shinyo suicide boats, like the one pictured here. Some 950 men of the Japanese garrison were assigned to units servicing and maintaining these vessels. (AC)



captured after the battle tallied. Although most of the garrison was not made up of combat troops, they would fight. Almost all of the army and naval personnel, and even most of the civilians, were willing to pick up a weapon and attack the enemy. The chance of success did not matter. Their training led the IJA and IJN members of the garrison to believe that death in combat was preferable to the disgrace of surrender. Even against hopeless odds they usually fought to the death. Many of the civilian workers emulated them.

Being willing to fight did not translate into fighting effectively. Not only was most of the garrison ill-trained for combat, they were not well organized. The garrison had been drawn from whatever forces were at hand when Rear Admiral Iwabuchi decided to hold the islands instead of retreating. They were organized into composite and improvised units. Their personnel had not trained together, and lacked unit cohesion. Individual units were incapable of coordinating with other units. This handicapped any ground defense. Captain Itagaki was aware of these shortcomings and planned to fight a set-piece battle from fixed positions against an amphibious assault.

Corregidor also had naval defenses, but they consisted of small craft. The weapons with the deadliest potential were the 70 suicide boats. Known as Shinyo ("Sea Quake") boats, they were small, fast motorboats. The ones used at Corregidor were one-man craft, with a 300kg (660lb) explosive charge in the bow. They could travel at up to 26 knots, and were intended to break up amphibious landings. They were capable of sinking ships up to the size of an LST. Like a honeybee, their sting was fatal to them as well as their prey: the charge was detonated by ramming a target. Extremely fragile, they depended on stealth and surprise for success. If spotted, they were easily destroyed.

There were also a small number of torpedo boats and motor patrols at Corregidor. They were intended to escort the Shinyo boats, protect them from attackers, and draw fire to allow the Shinyos to reach their targets. Although sturdier than the Shinyos, they, too, were vulnerable to all but the smallest guns.

ORDERS OF BATTLE

UNITED STATES

US ARMY

Rock Force

503rd Parachute Regimental Combat Team (Colonel George Jones)
- 1st Battalion, Parachute Infantry
- 2nd Battalion, Parachute Infantry
- 3rd Battalion, Parachute Infantry
- 462nd Parachute Field Artillery Battalion
- 161st Airborne Engineer Company
- Detachment 592nd Joint Assault Signal Company

34th Infantry Regiment
- 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry (reinforced)
- Battery A, 950th Antiaircraft (AA) Battalion
- 18th Port Surgical Hospital (reinforced)
- 174th Ordinance Service Detachment (Bomb Disposal Squad)
- Detachment, 98th Signal Battalion
- Detachment, 592nd Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment
- 603rd Tank Company (elements)
- Detachment, 592nd Joint Assault Signal Company
- Detachment, 6th Support Air Party (SAP)
- 3rd Platoon, Antitank (AT) Company, 34th Infantry Regiment
- 3rd Platoon, Cannon Company, 34th Infantry Regiment

592nd Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment

Rock Force Reserve

151st Infantry Regiment
- 1st Battalion, 151st Infantry Regiment

Caballo Invasion Force

151st Infantry Regiment
- 2nd Battalion, 151st Infantry Regiment

113th Engineering Battalion (elements)

Fort Drum Invasion Force

113th Engineering Battalion (elements)

151st Infantry Regiment
- 2nd Battalion, 151st Infantry Regiment
- F Company

Carabao Invasion Force

151st Infantry Regiment
- 1st Battalion, 151st Infantry Regiment

US NAVY

Heavy Cruiser Division

HMAS *Shropshire* (County class)
CA-36 USS *Minneapolis* (New Orleans class)
CA-33 USS *Portland* (Portland class)

Cruiser Division 12

CL-46 USS *Phoenix* (Brooklyn class)
CL-47 USS *Boise* (Brooklyn class)
CL-57 USS *Montpelier* (Cleveland class)
CL-58 USS *Denver* (Cleveland class)

Destroyer Squadron 21 (all Fletcher class)

DD-449 USS *Nicholas*
DD-445 USS *Fletcher*
DD-446 USS *Radford*
DD-450 USS *O'Bannon*
DD-448 USS *La Vallette*
DD-681 USS *Hopewell*

Destroyer Squadron 46 (all Fletcher class)

DD-685 USS *Picking*
DD-580 USS *Young*
DD-578 USS *Wickes*

Destroyer Squadron 60 (all Allen M. Sumner class)

DD-722 USS *Barton*
DD-693 USS *Moale*
DD-694 USS *Ingraham*
DD-723 USS *Walke*
DD-725 USS *O'Brien*

Minesweeping Detachment (all Admirable class)

Sweep Unit 4 (Lieutenant-Commander J.R. Kiefer)
- AM-295 USS *Saunter*
- AM-294 USS *Salute*
- AM-296 USS *Scout*
- AM-297 USS *Scrimmage*
- AM-299 USS *Sentry*
- One other, name unknown

Sweep Unit 5 (eight minesweepers)
Sweep Unit 6 (eight minesweepers)

Amphibious Force

DD-371 USS *Conyngham* (Mahan class)
25 LCMs
Approximately six LCP(R)s

Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron (12 PT boats)

USAAF: FIFTH AIR FORCE

Elements included the following:

3rd Bombardment Group (Light)

8th Bombardment Squadron (Light) (A-20)
13th Bombardment Squadron (Light) (A-20)
89th Bombardment Squadron (Light) (A-20)
90th Bombardment Squadron (Light) (A-20)

22nd Bombardment Group (Medium)

2nd Bombardment Squadron (Medium) (B-25)
19th Bombardment Squadron (Medium) (B-25)
33rd Bombardment Squadron (Medium) (B-25)
408th Bombardment Squadron (Medium) (B-25)

Members of the 503rd PRCT land at the Golf Course on February 16, 1945. This photo captures the rough terrain on which they landed. (LOC)

35th Fighter Group
39th Fighter Squadron (P-47)
40th Fighter Squadron (P-47)
41st Fighter Squadron (P-47)
58th Fighter Group
69th Fighter Squadron (P-47)
310th Fighter Squadron (P-47)
311th Fighter Squadron (P-47)
71st Recon Group
17th Recon Squadron
317th Troop Carrier Group—"Jungle Skippers"
39th Troop Carrier Squadron
40th Troop Carrier Squadron
41st Troop Carrier Squadron
46th Troop Carrier Squadron
345th Bombardment Group (Medium)
498th Bombardment Squadron (Medium) (B-25)
499th Bombardment Squadron (Medium) (B-25)
500th Bombardment Squadron (Medium) (B-25)
501st Bombardment Squadron (Medium) (B-25)
348th Fighter Group
340th Fighter Squadron (P-47)
341st Fighter Squadron (P-47)
342nd Fighter Squadron (P-47)
460th Fighter Squadron (P-47)
494th Bombardment Group (Heavy)
864th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy) (B-24)
865th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy) (B-24)
866th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy) (B-24)
867th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy) (B-24)

JAPAN

31ST SPECIAL NAVAL BASE

Captain Akira Itagaki
(Troop numbers are given in brackets.)
On Corregidor
- HQ Unit (115)
- 3rd Battalion, 22nd Field Artillery Regiment
    - 1st Battery, Fortress (Lieutenant Endo, IJN; 44)
    - 2nd Battery, Fortress (Ensign Funaki; 30)
    - 3rd Battery, Fortress (Warrant Officer Yamoto; 94)
    - 4th Battery, Fortress (Ensign Takahaski; 35)
    - 1st Dual Purpose Gun Battery (Ensign Ishiguro; 99)
    - 2nd Dual Purpose Gun Battery (Ensign Furutani; 79)
    - 1st Machine-Gun Battery (Ensign Tamura; 74)
    - 2nd Machine-Gun Battery (Warrant Officer Araki; 67)
    - 3rd Machine-Gun Battery (Warrant Officer Tashiro; 67)
    - 4th Machine-Gun Battery (Warrant Officer unknown; 69)
- Suicide Boat Unit (Commander Shinotai; Headquarters 18)
    - 70 Shinyo suicide boats
    - 9th Suicide Unit (Lieutenant Nakashima; 176)
    - 10th Suicide Unit (Lieutenant Ishikawa; 153)
    - 11th Suicide Unit (Lieutenant Yamasaki; 201)
    - 12th Suicide Unit (Lieutenant Matsue; 199)
    - 13th Suicide Unit (Lieutenant Horiuchi; 187)
- Torpedo Boat Unit (125)
- Water Patrol Unit (364, including 93 civilians)
- Land Garrison Unit (Captain Ichinozawa, IJN; 822)
- Signal Unit (Telegraph and Radar) (Major Oyamada; 54)
- Administration Unit (Lieutenant Ueda, IJN; 75, including 27 civilians)
- Ordinance Unit (Technical Lieutenant Goto; 60, including 58 civilians)
- Expeditionary Unit, Civil Engineering Department
    - 219th Construction Battalion (Technical Captain Shida; 341, including 313 civilians)
    - 329th Construction Battalion (Technical Lieutenant Kino, IJN; 292)
    - 331st Construction Battalion (Commander Yoshida; 822)
- Medical Unit (Medical Lieutenant Matsumoto, IJN; 28)
- 111th Fishing Unit (70)
- Searchlight Unit (Warrant Officer Usui; 39)
- Mariveles Lumbering Expeditionary Unit (Warrant Officer Chayamo; 223, including seven civilians)

On Caballo Island
Caballo Garrison (approximately 400)
On El Fraile Island (Fort Drum)
Fort Drum Detachment (68)
On Carabao Island
Carabao Garrison (350)

Three Japanese soldiers killed on Corregidor. The Japanese garrison troops proved tenacious foes. They rarely surrendered, preferring to fight to the death rather than suffer the dishonor of surrender. (AC)

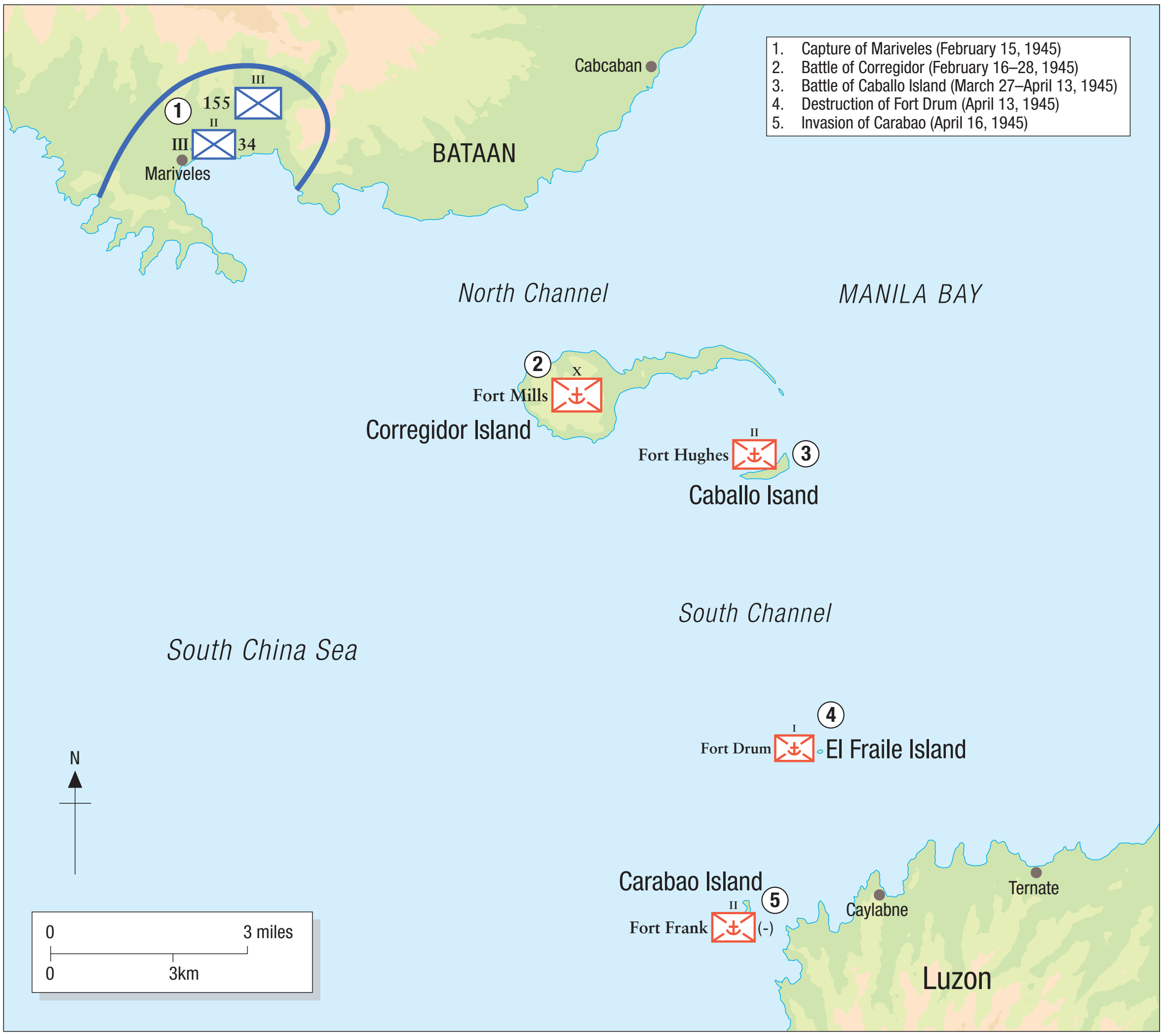
OPPOSING PLANS

The difference between the two sides went beyond the type of forces employed in this campaign. It also included the planning by both sides. The resources the US employed had been carefully chosen to provide the best results. Similarly, the plans for retaking the islands were meticulously drawn up, showed careful attention to detail, covered all expected contingencies, and had the flexibility to adjust to unexpected eventualities. By contrast, just as the Japanese forces committed to the defense of the islands were ad hoc and thrown together, Japanese plans to defend Corregidor, Caballo, El Fraile, and Carabao were improvised and haphazard.

The campaign's results reflected the level of planning by both sides. Both sides made errors. (The biggest one by the United States was to grossly underestimate the size of the Japanese garrison, which was six times larger than expected.) Because the US planners created planning in depth, their mistakes became distractions instead of overwhelming obstacles. Because Japanese commanders relied on sketchy and incomplete plans, their mistakes led to failure, and collapse. Worse, they failed in their only achievable objective: to maximize enemy casualties.

Japanese infantry, accompanied by a tank, advance during Japan's successful May 1942 invasion of Corregidor. Japan's defensive preparations were intended to forestall a similar US amphibious invasion. (USNHHC)

The Entrance to Manila Bay



1. Capture of Mariveles (February 15, 1945)
2. Battle of Corregidor (February 16–28, 1945)
3. Battle of Caballo Island (March 27–April 13, 1945)
4. Destruction of Fort Drum (April 13, 1945)
5. Invasion of Carabao (April 16, 1945)
Cabcaban
BATAAN
III
155
II
III
34
Mariveles
North Channel
MANILA BAY
X
Fort Mills
Corregidor Island
II
Fort Hughes
Caballo Isand
South Channel
South China Sea
I
Fort Drum
El Fraile Island
N
Carabao Island
II
Fort Frank
(-)
Caylabne
Ternate
Luzon
0
3 miles
0
3km

Both sides built their plans around the battlefields' terrain and the prewar defenses built into them. On Corregidor the Japanese extensively improved those defenses, while on the other three islands they depended chiefly on existing fortifications. The geography of Corregidor dictated the plans of both sides. However, while the Japanese merely relied on terrain to protect them, US plans made use of Corregidor's geography in ways unexpected by the Japanese defenders.

UNITED STATES

The decision to take Corregidor was made by General MacArthur on 22 January 1945; a mere two weeks after the US Sixth Army had landed at Lingayen Gulf, and only four weeks before the invasion of Corregidor occurred. By 22 January US forces had broken out of their Lingayen beachhead, and established a second one south of Manila Bay and southwest of Manila. The race to Manila was beginning, and Manila's harbor was important to future Allied plans. This required clearing the Japanese from the Bataan Peninsula, Corregidor, and Caballo. Control of that terrain ensured a safe path to Manila. All that was really necessary was control of southern Bataan and Corregidor as ships could traverse North Channel between the two avoiding the other fortified islands. Caballo's proximity to Corregidor meant its guns could shell Corregidor, so Caballo was added to the target list.

Troops of the 503rd PRCT prepare to make a combat jump from a C-47. The use of paratroopers gave the US an element of tactical surprise that facilitated victory on Corregidor. (US Army)

MacArthur turned over operational planning of the invasion to Sixth Army's commander, General Walter Kreuger. MacArthur recommended Krueger take Corregidor by parachute drop, amphibious invasion, or both. Krueger's operations section quickly drew up a plan. It envisioned an airdrop by the 503rd PRCT, reinforced by a near-simultaneous amphibious landing.

The basic concept was for the 503rd PRCT, an independent formation then in reserve on Mindoro, to capture key terrain on Corregidor and tie up the main Japanese forces. It would establish a defensive perimeter, which it would hold until relieved. The relief would be provided by an infantry battalion reinforced with armor and artillery detachments. It would arrive through a shore-to-shore amphibious landing from Bataan Peninsula to Corregidor.

This was simple in concept, but difficult in execution. It contained a lot of moving parts, all of which had to be coordinated for success. Army intelligence revealed the Japanese expected an amphibious landing, deploying the defenders to repel one. Tailside and Bottomside beaches were covered by machine guns and light artillery. Although a preinvasion bombardment would force the gun crews into shelter, it would cease as the landing craft approached the beaches. This gave gun crews time to man their positions prior to a landing and engage the landing craft in a withering crossfire.

An airdrop solved that problem. The troop-carrying aircraft followed the last wave of bombers. Almost immediately after the last bomb dropped, paratroopers followed. They would only be armed with light weapons immediately after landing, but that was enough to keep heavy weapons crews from reaching their positions. That bought time for the amphibious reinforcements to reach shore largely unmolested. These forces, armed with heavier weapons up to and including tanks and 105mm howitzers, would relieve the paratroopers.

The decision to undertake an airdrop resolved the composition of Rock Force, as planners dubbed the invasion force. A regiment of paratroopers was the right size for Corregidor. There was little room for more to be dropped. A reinforced infantry battalion would make up the amphibious component. A second infantry battalion would be held in reserve, in the event one of the four battalions committed to the invasion needed relief.

Where to drop paratroopers and land the amphibious contingent became the next question. The only place on Corregidor large enough for

This is typical of the appearance of much of Topside in February 1945. It was an uninviting drop zone, filled with obstacles and debris. Only two marginally acceptable drop zones were found, and both were far smaller than conventional landing zones. (AC)

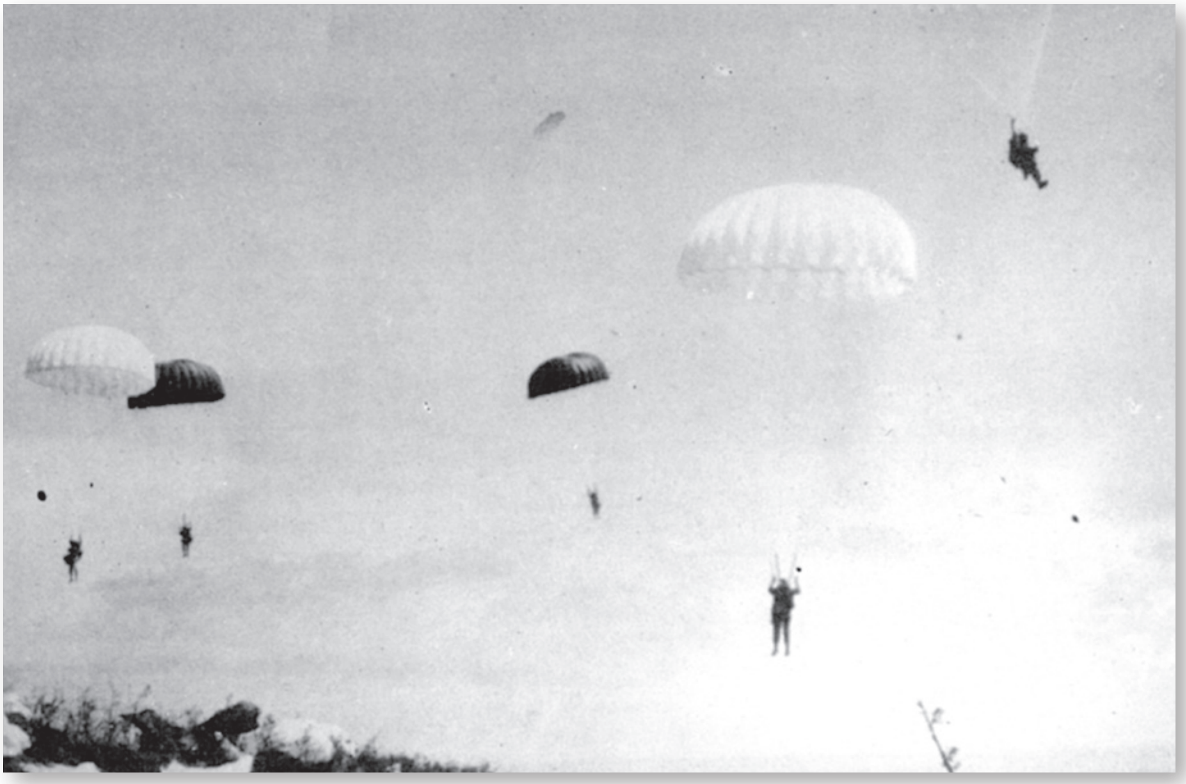
a standard landing zone was Tailside, around Kindley Field. Even that was only marginally large enough. Colonel George Jones, commanding Rock Force, originally recommended it as the drop zone after conducting a personal aerial reconnaissance of Corregidor.

Krueger overruled Jones. Corregidor's dominant terrain was Topside. From Topside, artillery could hit any point on Corregidor, including Kindley Field, using indirect fire. Even if a beachhead was established there, US forces would then face two uphill fights. The first, to take Malinta Hill, would be followed by a long slog across Bottomside and then up Middleside before reaching Topside. It was the battle the Japanese fought in 1942, the one they expected the US to fight in 1945, and the one they were prepared to fight.

Sixth Army planners did not want to fight Japan's battle. Instead, Jones was directed to land on Topside. Operations planners felt this put the 503rd PRCT directly on the key terrain and behind the Japanese gun emplacements ringing the periphery of Topside. Further, they believed the rough terrain of Topside would convince the Japanese a landing there was impossible. That provided an element of surprise which would help minimize US casualties.

Given his orders, Jones found two locations suitable for a drop zone. "Suitable" was defined as relatively flat and not covered with the ruins of prewar buildings. These were a parade ground and a golf course. Both were on the south side of the island near the middle of Topside. Both were small. The parade ground was 325 yards long by 250 yards wide. The Golf Course was 350 yards by 185 yards. The two were separated by around 150 yards. Both were surrounded by tangled undergrowth and shattered trees. They were pockmarked by bomb craters. While both had the virtue of

Colonel George Jones, commander of 503rd PRCT, and his staff plan the parachute drop using a scale model of Topside. One of the keys to US success was the meticulous planning conducted prior to joining combat. (US Army)



A "stick" of paratroopers descends on Corregidor on February 16, 1945. Each individual aircraft dropped six to ten paratroopers or drop bundles during each pass over the drop zones. This resulted in a protracted drop period. (AC)

being relatively flat, both fell off sharply to the south and west, giving way to steep cliffs.

Any airdrop would be complicated by the winds. At that time of year winds over Corregidor averaged 15–20mph with gusts of 25–35mph. That guaranteed a difficult landing even when hitting the drop zone. In the February dry season, prevailing winds blew from the north to south and northeast to southwest. This meant gusts had the potential to blow paratroopers past the drop zone and into or past the high cliffs at the edge of the drop zones.

The small drop zones and steep drop-offs near them prevented standard drop tactics. A standard "stick" (the contents of one aircraft dropping all its paratroopers in one pass) had a landing footprint 1,000 yards long. Pilots had to provide pinpoint precision when dropping troops including accounting for variable winds. The drop zones were too narrow for standard aircraft formations, in which the carrier aircraft flew in three-transport "V" formations.

Instead, the 317th Troop Carrier Group planned an entirely new flight pattern. Aircraft would fly in two single-column formations, one over each drop zone. The direction of flight would be from southwest to northeast, along the long axis of each drop zone and into the wind to lengthen time over target. As each aircraft reached the drop point, it had a 6–8-second interval in which it could drop troops. On each pass an aircraft would drop a stick of six to eight men (instead of the standard 21).

Once past Corregidor, the aircraft would circle around for another pass. The aircraft dropping on the parade ground (west of the Golf Course) would turn counterclockwise. The aircraft dropping on the Golf Course turned clockwise. The lead aircraft in each formation would join the formation behind the trailing aircraft. Each half of the 317th Troop Carrier Group would fly in a race-track oval over Corregidor until all paratroopers had been dropped. Three circuits of the race track were expected to be necessary.

This offered several advantages. It provided the best opportunity for men to actually land on their drop zone. It allowed a drop-master flying in an observing aircraft to adjust the altitude and time at which men were dropped to compensate for wind conditions. Circling in different directions separated the two formations, reducing impingement and possible resulting confusion or collisions. Regardless, Jones expected 20 percent casualties from the drop alone.

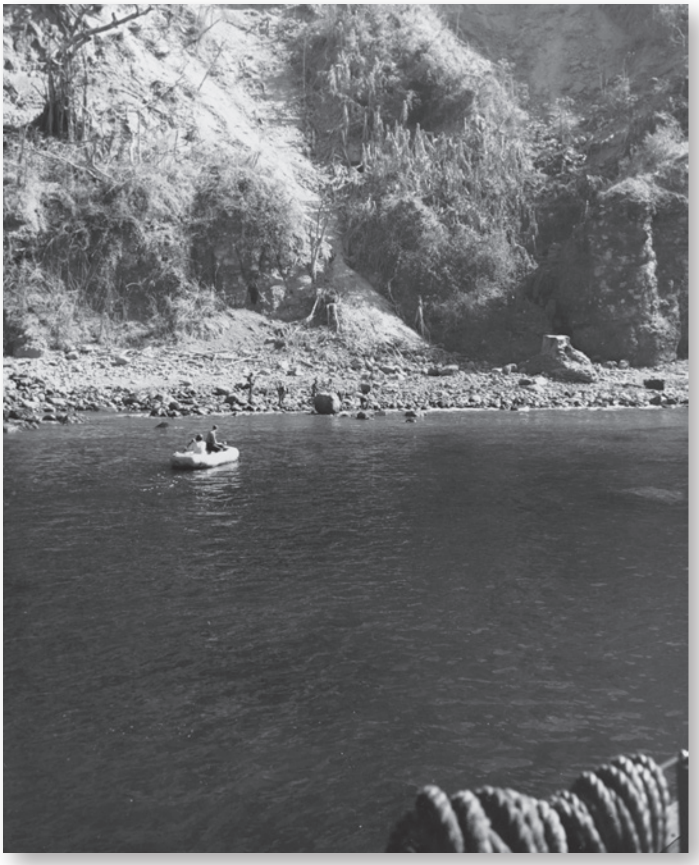
Three battalion-sized drops were planned: one on landing day at 0830hrs; a second at 1215hrs that day; and a third the following day at 0830hrs. Sunrise was at 0720hrs and sunset at 1901hrs. This timing allowed the transports to take off in predawn twilight and the first wave of paratroopers to land in full daylight.

Each lift would drop one battalion of parachute infantry, a detachment of the 503rd Headquarters Company, a battery of 75mm artillery, and a platoon of .50-cal. machine guns from the 462nd Parachute Field Artillery Battalion. The first lift would include the 503rd PRCT's engineering company and a detachment of a Joint Assault Signal Company (JASCO, to control naval gunfire support), and the second its service company. The Day 1 drops were each assigned 51 C-47s. Day 2's drop had 43. Twelve C-47s were assigned to daily resupply drops starting on Day 2. These would continue until amphibious resupply from the beach occurred.

The amphibious landing was no less meticulously organized. The landing was scheduled to occur at 1030hrs, two hours after the paratroopers first touched down. The landing site, designated Black Beach, was at San Jose, on the south side of Corregidor in Bottomside. Their objectives were to split the island between South Dock and North Dock, secure control of Malinta Hill, establish a secure beachhead for amphibious resupply and evacuation, and establish road communications with the 503rd PRCT on Topside.

Taking Bottomside divided the Japanese garrison into two parts that could be destroyed in detail. Bottomside was also close enough to Topside that a quick junction with the 503rd PRCT could occur. Controlling Malinta Hill allowed the US to contain any Japanese forces in the Malinta Tunnel complex and Tailside, and destroy them in a sequenced manner.

Planners expected some paratroopers to be blown past the drop zone, possibly into the water around Corregidor. The US Navy stationed PT boats offshore to rescue these men. Here, a raft from a PT boat extracts a paratrooper from the water. (USNHHC)



The 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry would be heavily reinforced. A fourth infantry company was attached. In addition to organic weapons, the battalion heavy weapons company, a tank platoon, and an antiaircraft battery accompanied the landing. A bomb disposal squad, and an antitank company and cannon company from the 34th Infantry Regiment's organic artillery rounded out the combat forces A surgical hospital accompanied the landing force.

The Army would be heavily assisted by the US Navy and USAAF. The Navy provided firepower in the form of seven cruisers and 14 destroyers. The original plan called for four light cruisers and six destroyers to provide fire support to reduce the batteries on both Corregidor and Caballo, starting three days prior to the intended landing, and to protect the auxiliary vessels needed to clear minefields and move troops. It was also supposed to provide on-call fire support to the troops on the islands. This force was reinforced by three heavy cruisers and five destroyers on L-1 (Landing Day minus 1).

The Navy also provided a flotilla of minesweepers, which were to clear Mariveles Harbor and the approaches to Corregidor, Caballo, El Fraile, and Carabao. The minesweeping was to be completed two days before the landings. A PT-boat squadron accompanied the other ships, to protect the landing craft and minesweepers from any attacks by Japanese small craft, Shinyo boats, and patrol boats. The PT boats were also to serve lifeguard duty, hovering near the shore of Corregidor to rescue any paratroopers blown off the island during the airdrop.

The USAAF started a prelanding bombardment on January 23, the day after MacArthur decided to recapture Corregidor. Their plan was straightforward: flatten everything on Corregidor. Between January 23 and up until the arrival of the troop-carrying C-47s on L-Day, they plastered Corregidor with bombs. Over the next 25 days the US bombers dropped a total of 3,128 tons of bombs during their daily raids. The targeting was indiscriminate. Anything manmade was considered fair game.

JAPAN

The Japanese garrison knew it had almost no chance of repelling an invasion of Corregidor and the other Manila Bay island fortresses. No reinforcements were coming, as the islands were ordered abandoned and the garrisons were withdrawn to the mainland. Yet the commander of the 31st Special Naval Base felt it a matter of honor to fight to the last man to hold his position. His deputy commanding Corregidor planned to follow those orders. A glorious resistance which bled the attackers would buy time to prepare the defenses of Japan's Home Islands. If enough casualties could be inflicted on the Allies, they might agree to a negotiated end to the war, leaving Japan uninvaded.

Japan knew how difficult an invasion of Corregidor could be. They took 2,100 casualties, including 900 dead, when they landed on Corregidor in May 1942. The US defenders inflicted this amount even though they surrendered when Japanese forces reached Malinta Hill. Japanese troops were unwilling to surrender. Their planners reasonably expected US casualties to exceed what they had suffered three years earlier, perhaps by an order of magnitude.

Corregidor's commander, Captain Akira Itagaki, believed any invasion of Corregidor would be exclusively amphibious. There were three places where invaders might land: Tailside, Bottomside, or the draws on the western end of Corregidor that offered a pathway to Topside's crest, avoiding the unscalable cliffs on that end of the island.

Tailside, the long, low, eastern portion of the island, was viewed as the most likely landing area. It was where Japan landed in 1942. It had the poorest defensive terrain on Corregidor, and offered good locations for landing craft to beach. "The poorest defensive terrain" was relative, however. It was filled with tunnel complexes (notably at Ordnance Point and Monkey Point) and riddled with defensive positions, many deep enough to provide shelter from a pre-invasion bombardment.

Bottomside presented a more problematic landing zone. It contained North Dock and South Dock, the main facilities for supplying Corregidor. That made it valuable to any attacker. However, it lay between Malinta Hill and Corregidor's head. Any forces landing there could potentially get caught in crossfire between gun positions on Malinta Hill and Topside. It was also filled with ruined buildings and debris, which would slow attacking movement. Captain Itagaki probably hoped the US would land there, as it could be turned into a killing ground.

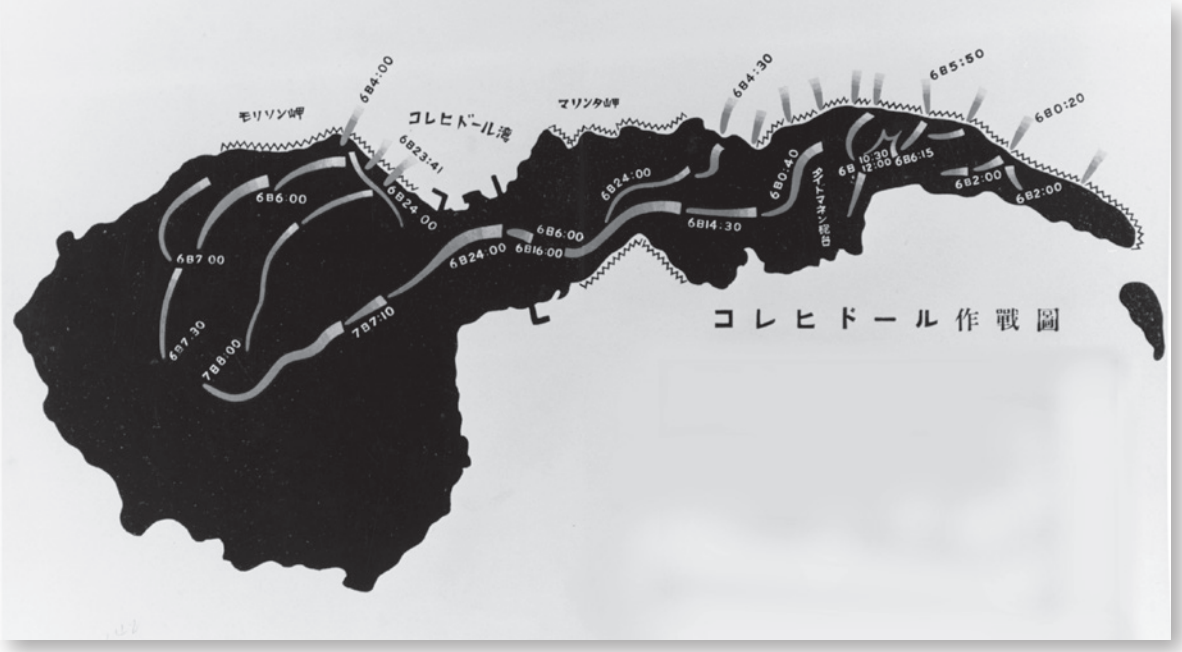
Japanese troops advancing up Tailside in May 1942. The Japanese suffered 2,100 casualties when they invaded Corregidor in 1942. They hoped to inflict a multiple of that number on the US when it invaded. Japanese plans were built around maximizing US casualties. (USNHHC)

Finally, the draws leading to Topside had potential as landing beaches, but they were too small to support large formations. They could also be easily covered by light artillery and heavy machine guns, making any advance up them suicidal. They could also be covered by the prewar artillery positions. While the prewar guns were useless, the reinforced concrete fortifications housing them were excellent defensive positions. Again, Captain Itagaki probably hoped the US would attempt landings there.

Captain Itagaki had been cautioned the US might conduct an airdrop. He believed the only suitable airdrop landing zone was at Kindley Field on Corregidor's tail. Malinta Hill, Middleside, and Topside were rocky hills, unsuitable for airdrops. The few flat areas on Topside were small, surrounded by wrecked buildings, precipices, and brush.

Paratroopers landing at Kindley Field would reinforce any amphibious troops, but would then have to battle uphill to capture Malinta Hill and then Middleside before reaching Topside. Since airborne troops had lighter weapons than standard infantry, there was no reason to drop them there rather than land the equivalent amount of conventional infantry by sea.

Captain Itagaki planned his defense around that assessment, and using all assets available to him. The artillery on Corregidor and Caballo guarded seaborne approaches to Corregidor. The guns would engage any invasion fleet until they were knocked out or their crews forced to withdraw within fortifications. He would also deploy the Shinyo boats at Corregidor during



A map showing the May 1942 Japanese invasion, during which Japanese troops had landed on the north coast of Tailside. In 1945, since Captain Akira Itagaki (the Japanese commander on Corregidor) considered the only suitable parachute drop zone to be Kindley Field, he placed most of his available infantry in defensive positions on Tailside to repulse the landing expected there. (AC)

the enemy's approach to the island. Since invasions typically took place near dawn, the Shinyo boats and their escorting torpedo boats would attack during nighttime hours.

Once the invaders had battled their way through these defences, Captain Itagaki planned a protracted fight on Corregidor. He placed perhaps half his available infantry in the tail to bleed the initial landings he expected there. He fortified Malinta Hill. He placed light artillery and machine guns around the perimeter of Topside and Middleside to cover the draws, and so they could engage US troops as they advanced across Bottomside once they took Malinta Hill. If the US forced its way across Bottomside and up Middleside, the Topside fortifications would be used for a last stand.

Similar defenses were planned for Caballo, El Fraile, and Carabao. Their garrisons would attempt to resist a landing by US forces, but would fall back if unsuccessful. Then, they would retreat into the prewar fortifications built on the respective islands and wait for the invading troops to dig them out.

Had the US followed Japan's plan, Captain Itagaki's dispositions would have created massive US casualties. The artillery on Topside dominated the whole island. The Imperial Japanese Army 150mm cannon could reach every spot on the tail, although they needed artillery observers on Malinta Hill for indirect fire in its shadow. The Japanese arranged the defensive works to resist an east-to-west and uphill advance. Captain Itagaki established a command post on the southeast side of Topside, from where he could observe the presumed direction of the enemy advance and direct the battle. Communications lines ran to this post, facilitating coordination of counterattacks.

The one thing he failed to prepare for was a parachute drop on Topside itself. His engineers placed no obstacles to block gliders or impale paratroopers. The existing terrain was viewed as a sufficient obstacle. Nor were many of the defensive positions optimized to guard against an attack from the rear. Topside was the weakpoint in his defense perimeter.

THE CAMPAIGN

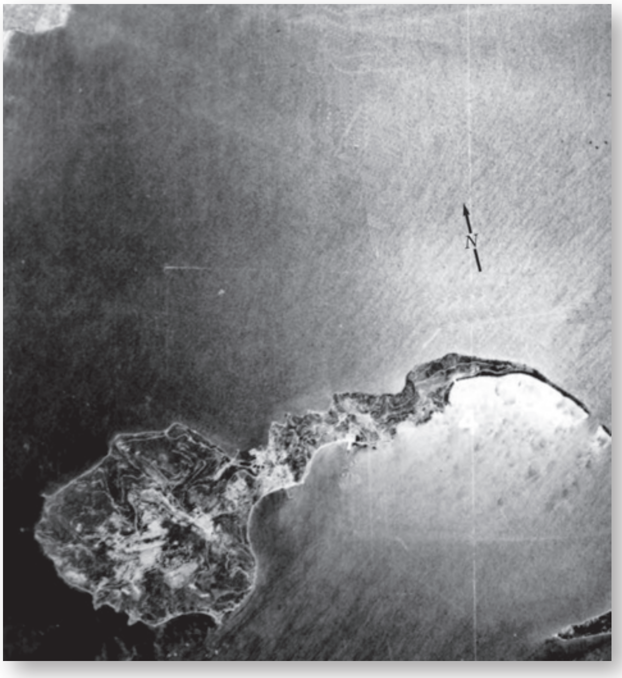
The campaign to clear the Manila Bay islands started on January 23, 1945 and ended on April 16. It was a relatively small campaign in terms of troop numbers. Each side committed no more than 6,000 ground soldiers. Perhaps as many as 20,000 members of the US Navy and USAAF participated at some point during this period. They provided fire support, transportation, and supply to the US soldiers on the ground.

Despite the length of the campaign, relatively little of it involved ground combat. There was a 12-day fight on Corregidor between February 16 and 27. Fighting on Caballo Island consumed another ten days, of which only four days involved conventional ground combat; the rest was a combat engineering exercise. The battle for El Fraile was a brief day, with the infantry providing security for combat engineers. There was no fighting on Carabao, and only a single casualty—a pig, who survived the battle but ended up the guest of honor at a barbeque following the assault.

Preparations consumed most of the time. Twenty-six days of intense aerial bombardment preceded the invasion of Corregidor. During the last three days of this bombardment, the US Navy joined in, shelling Corregidor and Caballo for 72 hours. Mariveles Harbor was cleared the day before the Corregidor landing. Minesweeping consumed three days.

The US Army captured Bataan in the days immediately before the Corregidor landings, through a combination of troops advancing overland from the north and an amphibious landing at Mariveles. This provided the jumping-off point for amphibious forces attacking Corregidor.

The operation against Corregidor, despite its complexity and compressed planning schedule, went largely as planned. The battle was decided by the end of its second day. Fortune favored the more-prepared side, which was the United States. Japanese missteps, combined with breaks falling the American way, gave the US control of the most important strategic parts of Corregidor by sunset on February 17.



An aerial reconnaissance photograph of Corregidor taken in January 1945. Bataan Peninsula can be seen to the north (upper left) and Caballo Island to the south (bottom right). The channelizing effect of these islands on travel to Manila is obvious. (US Army)

Corregidor under aerial bombardment prior to the arrival of US forces. During a two-week blitz the Fifth Air Force, assisted by the Seventh and Thirteenth Air Forces, dropped a total of 3,128 tons of bombs on Corregidor. Most of the Fifth Air Force's B-24 heavy bombers were committed to this campaign. (USAF)

A week of hard fighting followed, but it consisted of mopping-up. No combination of Japanese counterattacks could have driven the US off the islands. The garrison even failed to cause severe casualties among the invasion force. The 503rd PRCT and 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry were committed to new campaigns the month following Corregidor's capture.

The recapture of Corregidor opened a passage between the South China Sea and Manila, which itself was recaptured on March 3. Ships could now use North Channel between US-held Bataan and Corregidor and across Manila Bay without the Japanese molesting them. The capture of the three remaining islands were clearing actions conducted by fresh troops, some drawn from the force occupying Corregidor. All were relatively minor operations, but demonstrated the ability of US forces to use unconventional means to defeat unexpectedly stubborn resistance.

PRELIMINARY OPERATIONS: JANUARY 23–FEBRUARY 15, 1945

Formal planning for the Corregidor landings began on February 3, 1945. Preparing Corregidor for a landing began 12 days before that. Upon being informed of MacArthur's intention to capture Corregidor, Lieutenant-General George Kenney began an aerial siege of the island. Most of the Fifth Air Force's Fifth Bomber Command B-24 heavy bombers spent the next two weeks hitting Corregidor. They were joined by heavy bombers of the Seventh and Thirteenth Air Forces, which used Corregidor as a target of last resort when weather prevented primary and secondary targets from being hit.

Corregidor's area measures 2.1 square miles. Topside's area is less than 1 square mile. By February 16, a total of 3,128 tons of bombs had been dropped on the island, an average of 260 tons per day. This was the equivalent of 90 sorties per day, as most of the bombs were dropped by B-24s during this period. Most of the tonnage was dropped on the western half of the island, from Malinta Hill to Cheney Ravine. Primarily targeted were any visible manmade structures: buildings, gun emplacements, and fortifications which could be seen from the air.

The heavy US bombardment created relatively light Japanese casualties. Fortifications on Corregidor, including the Malinta Tunnel complex (the entrance of which is shown here), provided excellent protection for the garrison. (US Army)

Although impressive, the damage done by the bombing was limited. Most of the structures on Corregidor were destroyed. San Jose was flattened. The visible gun positions were silenced. Yet most bombs lacked sufficient penetration to damage the cave structures riddling the island. Even 2,000lb bombs could not create a crater deep enough to disturb the prewar fortifications built by the US. (The Japanese had tried and failed to penetrate them using armor-piercing 290mm shells in 1942.)

Many of the bombs dropped on Corregidor during this phase were general-purpose or semi-armor-piercing 500lb bombs. They were highly effective against frame and metal roof construction and could fracture roadways, runways, and concrete foundations. They turned Topside into a moonscape, creating rubble until the rubble bounced, but they could not reach the underground bunkers and magazines, where the garrison sheltered.

The bombardment was effective in disrupting the Japanese defenses. Any artillery in a surface mount was silenced. Never heavy to begin with, antiaircraft fire from Corregidor ceased by February 12. The surviving guns were taken underground to preserve them for the invasion. The bombardment also conditioned the garrison to wait in their shelters. However quickly they remanned their positions after the bombardment ceased in the first few days of the siege, by February 16, they were content to wait in their shelters until well after the bombs stopped dropping.

The USAAF also patrolled the waters around Corregidor. Japanese barge traffic between Bataan and Corregidor began increasing in early February. Fighter sweeps by the P-47s of the 348th Fighter Group interdicted the barges. Between February 11 and 15, P-47s strafed and rocketed barges attempting to ship troops from Bataan (which was being invaded by US Army ground forces) to Corregidor. They claimed 2,000 enemy soldiers killed.

The US Army launched its sweep into the Bataan Peninsula on February 12. While not part of the seizure of Corregidor, it was a necessary precursor to the invasion. Holding Bataan gave the US control of both sides of North Channel. Bataan proved lightly held. There were perhaps 1,400 Japanese scattered throughout the peninsula. Pro-US Filipino guerrillas did such an efficient job of blowing bridges along Bataan's roads that this was more of an impediment to the US advance than the Japanese resistance.

The US 1st Regiment, 6th Infantry Division began a sweep down the east coast of the Bataan Peninsula that day. Starting at Dinalupihan at the northern entrance of Bataan, they swept down the coast road. At Pilar, the regiment split. Part of it advanced across Bataan on the Bagac–Pilar road which ran in the valley formed between Mount Natib and Mount Mariveles. The rest continued south on the coast road to Limay, reaching the town by February 16.

Meanwhile, the 1st RCT boarded boats at Olongapo, and leapfrogged by sea to the southern tip of Bataan, landing at Mariveles on February 15. Opposition was light, limited to a few machine guns. They had control of the town of Mariveles by nightfall. The next day they sent two columns out to complete the conquest of Bataan. One went north along a road paralleling Bataan's western coast, to join forces with 1st Regiment troops in Bagac. The other went east along the road to Limay, where they linked up with 1st Regiment forces waiting in that town. By February 18, the two regiments had sealed off Corregidor from reinforcement through Bataan.

Five light cruisers sail from Subic Bay on February 13 to conduct a prelanding bombardment of Mariveles, Corregidor, and Caballo. Photographed from USS *Phoenix* (CL-46), the other visible ships are (from left to right): USS *Boise* (CL-47); USS *Denver* (CL-58); USS *Cleveland* (CL-55); and USS *Montpelier* (CL-57). (USNHHC)

Part of the reason for anemic Japanese resistance, especially at Mariveles, was Fifth Air Force's pre-invasion air support. The Fifth Air Force began pounding Mariveles on February 10. Twenty-four B-24s, and 72 A-20s escorted by a fighter squadron hit Mariveles that morning. Identical numbers of B-24s and A-20s returned for afternoon strikes. The Fifth Air Force repeated raids on the same scale daily through February 15. It also sent 48 B-25s and 60 fighters to conduct a rolling air barrage along the Bagac–Pilar road, assisting the US Army's advance.

The greatest challenges to the Bataan landings came from the mines at sea and gunfire from Corregidor. There was only one naval casualty, *LSM-169*, which struck a mine in the seventh wave and caught fire. It did not sink, but the 24th Reconnaissance Troop aboard the landing ship suffered personnel casualties and lost most of its equipment. *LSM-169* was successfully beached, patched up, and safely returned to Subic Bay. A Japanese gun from Corregidor landed a near miss on a high-speed US destroyer transport loading troops into a landing craft. Seventeen infantrymen were wounded.

That only one ship struck a mine and only one warship was hit by artillery in Mariveles Harbor was due to the efforts of the US Navy. Its preparations began two days prior to the Mariveles landing. It had sent Task Group (TG) 77.3, a mixed force of destroyers and cruisers under Rear Admiral Berkey, to provide fire support at both Bataan and Corregidor. Also sent were 21 minesweepers led by Lieutenant-Commander John R. Keefer. Their task was to sweep the mines around the entrance to Manila Bay, in Mariveles Harbor, and around the four islands guarding the entrance to Manila Bay.

These ships had a second function: bait. They were slow moving, and minesweeping required the ships to follow straight, unmaneuvering paths. Berkey's TG 77.3 accompanied the sweepers. Berkey hoped the Japanese batteries, silent since February 10, would be tempted to fire at the easy targets offered by the minesweepers.

Minesweeping began on February 13. As the small vessels systematically swept the approaches to Manila Bay, TG 77.3 began a methodical bombardment of the Bataan shore, and targets on Corregidor, Caballo, El Fraile, and Carabao. To Berkey's disappointment, the Japanese refused to take the bait on the 13th, declining to respond. Berkey wrote in his report, "Juicy targets were placed under the [Japanese] nose, but he declined to take a crack at them." Sweeping work was completed by the end of the day on

USS *Hopewell* comes under fire as it provides protection to minesweepers clearing Manila and Mariveles bays. Berkey's force quickly silenced the Japanese shore batteries, but not before they sank *YMS-48* and damaged *Hopewell* badly enough to require shipyard repairs. (USNHHC)

February 13; warships and minesweepers returned to Subic Bay for the night.

When they returned the next morning, they received a different reception. The morning started with the minesweepers clearing the channel between Corregidor and Caballo. Berkey's cruisers and destroyers began their scheduled bombardment of Corregidor at 0840hrs. At 0933hrs the sweepers reported being fired on from Corregidor. USS *Boise* was detached to silence the offending Japanese battery. A few minutes after that, batteries from Caballo opened up on minesweepers working the waters south of Caballo. Soon, other guns from Corregidor were engaging the minesweepers, as were guns from Bataan and Carabao.

A brief but intense firefight began, with the minesweepers joining in with the cruisers and destroyers to silence the Japanese fire. By 1018hrs, the Japanese guns fell silent. The minesweepers finished sweeping the sea around Corregidor and Caballo by 1130hrs. They then moved to Mariveles Bay to sweep the approaches to the landing area.

Destroyers preceded the minesweepers, sinking buoys and floats in the harbor to provide the sweepers a clear approach. At 1300hrs, *Fletcher* was struck on the forecastle by a 6in. shell fired from Corregidor. *Phoenix* and two destroyers located the battery in a tunnel through Topside's cliffs, and then silenced it permanently.

There were other Japanese batteries that could reach Mariveles Bay, and they soon had the minesweepers under fire. *Hopewell* was sent in to protect the minesweepers. At 1359hrs *YMS-48* was struck by a shell, and set ablaze. The minesweepers were ordered out of Mariveles Bay, while Berkey's ships dealt with the shore batteries. They silenced them, but not without injury. At 1413hrs *Hopewell* was struck four times. The damage was severe enough to merit a trip to Manus in the Admiralties for repairs. Meanwhile, *Fletcher* laid down a smokescreen to allow it to take the crew off *YMS-48*, and sink the crippled vessel.

Guns silenced, the minesweepers resumed clearing Mariveles Harbor, covered by *La Vallette* and *Radford*. These destroyers were supposed to sink floaters (mines cut by the sweepers). *La Vallette* misjudged its approach to a mine and struck it. *Radford*, attempting to aid *La Vallette*, ran into a second. Both were able to steam to Subic Bay, but were out of the fight.

Berkey's ships had gone through so much ammunition on February 14 that reinforcements were sent. TG 78.3, three heavy cruisers and six destroyers, arrived on the 15th. At dawn, the two task groups, less the three damaged destroyers, steamed between Bataan and Corregidor. They began a systematic bombardment of Corregidor, with the cruisers' off-side 5in. guns covering the Mariveles landing beaches. Japanese batteries on Corregidor fired back a few times, but were so smothered with return fire they quickly ceased fire. Naval gunfire ceased at 0900hrs as the USAAF took over pounding Corregidor with an airstrike.

US Navy warships bombard Corregidor (foreground) and Caballo (background) on February 15, the day before the US landings. (USNHHC)

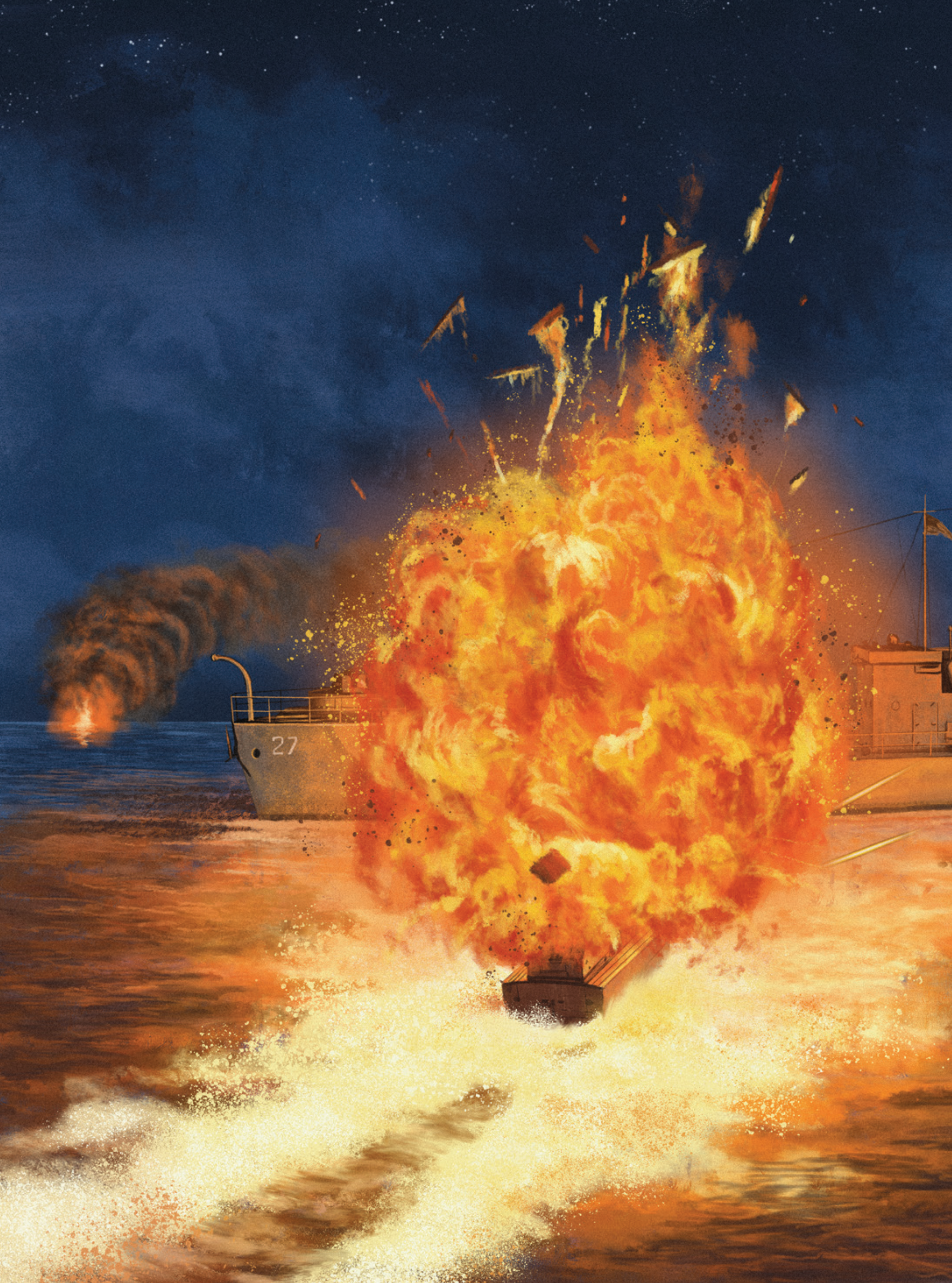
It soon became apparent the Japanese on Corregidor had not been silenced, but had merely ceased firing. As the first wave of landing craft approached Mariveles 30 minutes later, the Corregidor guns began firing at those within range. They failed to disrupt the landing. Their accuracy was poor. Only one ship was hit and damaged, an LCP(R). Destroyers and cruisers responded quickly, and the Corregidor batteries on the island's north side were finally silenced. They did not resume firing for the rest of the day, nor the next day.

The first wave of US troops landed at Mariveles at 1100hrs. The final wave beached at 1135hrs. Unloading proceeded slowly, and some LSTs still had cargo aboard when night fell. They remained beached, and unloading continued into the night. High water was at 0115hrs, by which time they were empty, and were unbeached. Mariveles Bay was filled with US shipping, including the 35 LCMs that would carry the 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry from Mariveles Bay to Corregidor. They formed a target perfect for Corregidor's 17ft-long Shinyo boats.

The Shinyos began slipping out of Corregidor after midnight on January 16. The suicide boats had been stored in Corregidor's tunnel system behind steel doors in a water gate, intending to preserve them despite their fragility. Japan sent 70 of these craft to Corregidor, but there is no record of how many still remained operational by February. US Navy records indicate 30-odd boats reached Mariveles Harbor. More may have been sent, but sank before reaching their targets due to the hazards of the sea. They may have been swamped by waves or simply fell apart en route. Some remained behind at Corregidor, most likely due to mechanical problems. They would later be discovered in tunnels on Corregidor's tail after the island's capture. Others could have been entombed in sections of tunnel brought down later by the Japanese and never found; or the US Navy simply undercounted the attackers. Thirty were more than enough to cause mischief. They arrived at the entrance to Mariveles Harbor at 0315hrs.

The harbor was well guarded. A cordon of LCS(L)s, supported by LCI support craft, were anchored across the harbor mouth. The LCIs had been converted to support craft to provide fire support at landing beaches, armored and with extra guns. This cordon served as pickets that night, protecting the LCMs to be used to carry troops to Corregidor later that day and the LSTs unloading supplies for troops ashore at Bataan. They were supported by an outer ring of destroyers.

The sea and sky were dark on the night of February 15/16, which fell three days after the new moon. The moon had set at 0840hrs on February 15, and would not rise until after dawn, and thus the resulting battle was fought on a moonless night. The small, wooden Shinyo boats proved difficult to spot in the darkness and were elusive targets for radar. From the boats, the slab-sided landing craft were silhouetted against the starlit skies. The Shinyos kept their speed down as they crossed the straits to Mariveles.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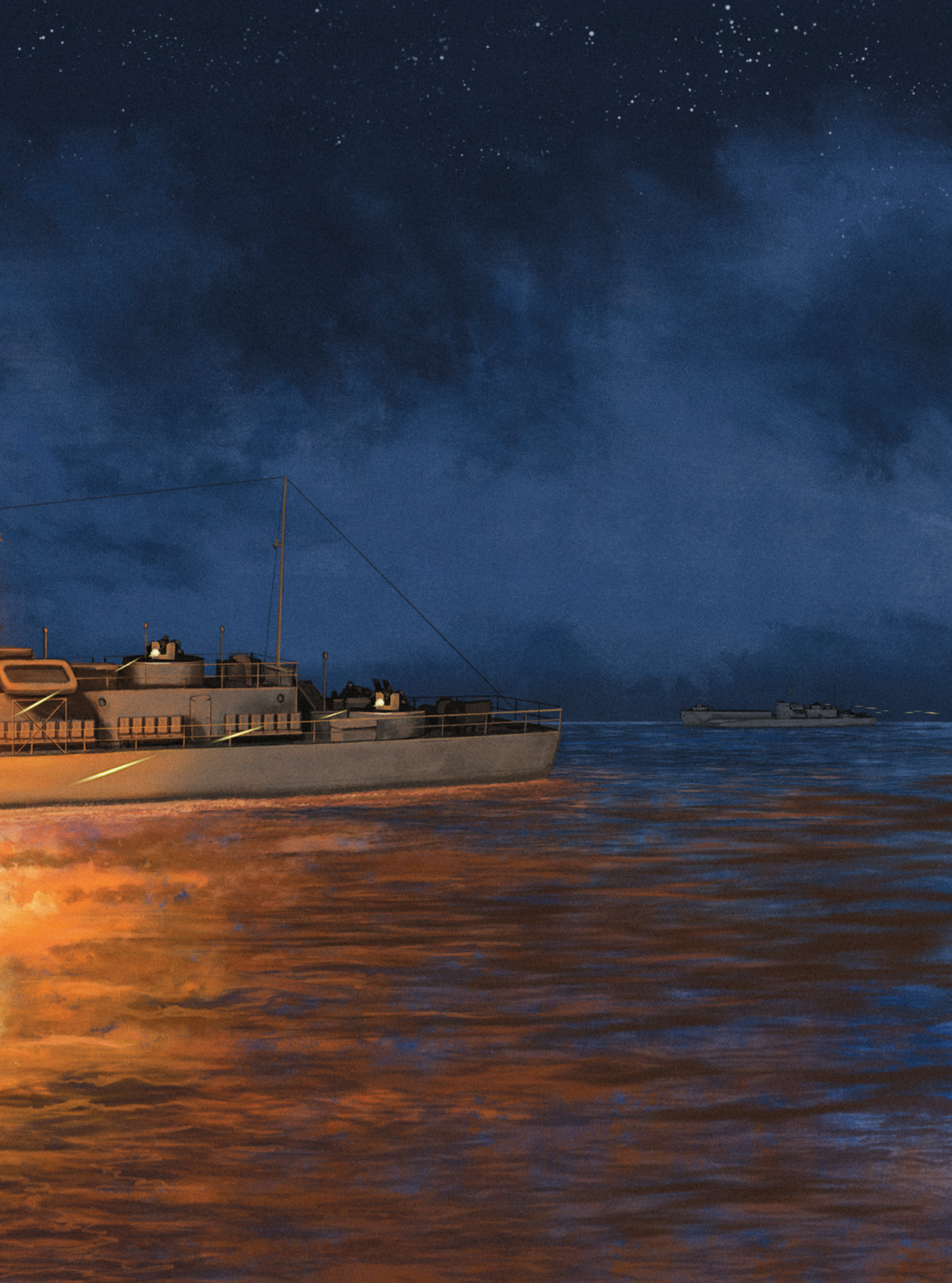
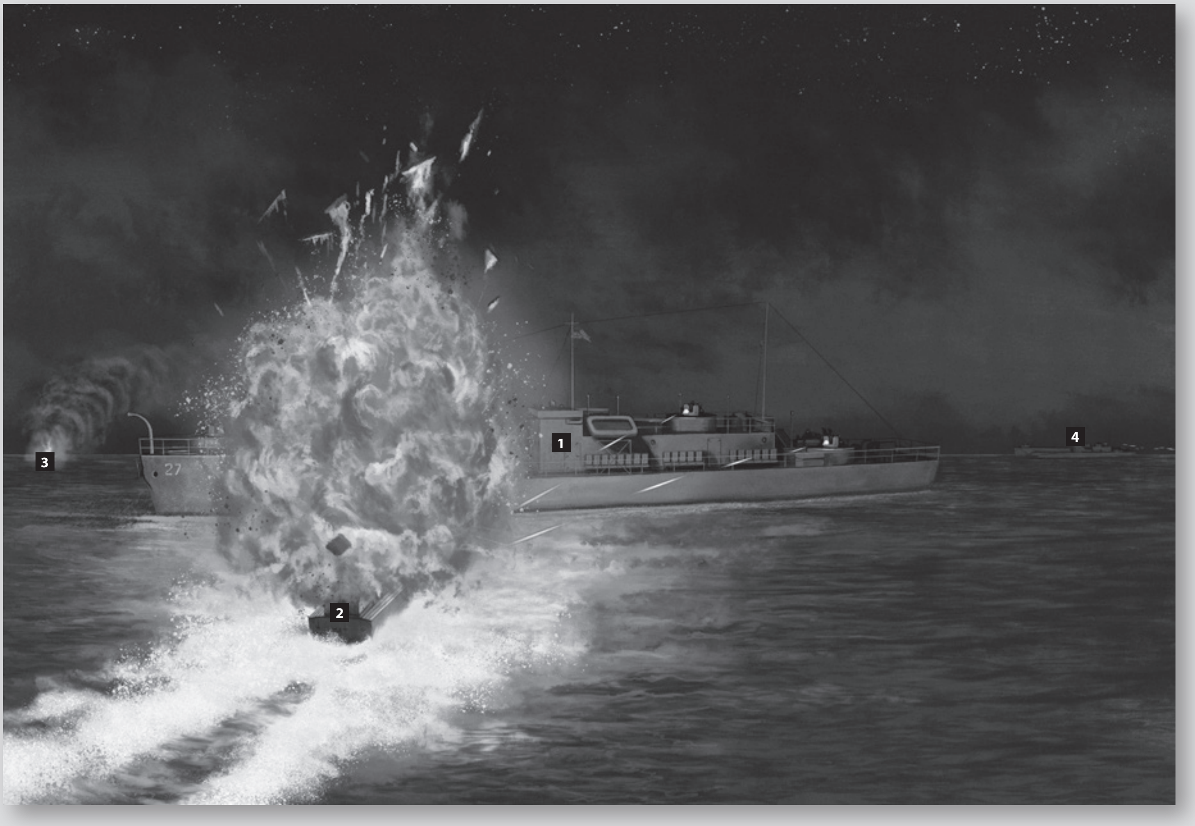




BATTLE WITH THE SUICIDE BOATS, MARIVELES HARBOR, FEBRUARY 16, 1945 (PP. 42–43)

In the predawn hours of February 16, the Japanese garrison on Corregidor launched Shinyo suicide boats to attack the US Navy landing craft in Mariveles Harbor, with the intention of sinking them. It was a last-ditch effort to prevent Corregidor from being invaded. How many Shinyos left Corregidor that night is unknown. There may have been as many as 50, or as few as 30. We know that 30 reached Mariveles Harbor. At its entrance the US Navy had a picket line of LCI(L)s and LCIs to guard the harbor. A wild nighttime melee ensued between the Shinyos and the guardian landing craft.

Three LCIs were sunk by Shinyos, all in the initial wave. A fourth, *LCI(L)-27* (**1**), commanded by Lieutenant Edwin R. Gardner, USNR ended up tangling with a handful of Shinyos, sinking five before they came close to it. It stopped and sank a sixth Shinyo (**2**), but not until it was almost on top of *LCI(L)-27*. The Shinyo boat blew up close enough to cause significant damage to the landing craft, disabling it.

Shown here is the scene at the height of the battle, as the sixth Shinyo is attacking the 158ft-long landing craft to port. A destroyed Shinyo can be seen burning in the background (**3**), as well as other US landing craft in the harbor (**4**). The damage inflicted on *LCI(L)-27* required dry dock repairs before it could return to service. *LCI(L)-27* served in the Pacific until the end of the war, and was decommissioned in January 1946.

Japanese Shinyos struck the US Navy at Mariveles Harbor in the predawn hours of February 16. *LCI(L)-27* (shown in 1944) sank five Shinyos without damage to itself before a sixth exploded close enough to cause it severe damage. (AC)

The equivalent of a naval knife fight developed into a no-holds-barred brawl between the Shinyo boats and the defensive cordon that lasted until dawn. The Shinyo had to ram to attack, with attacker and target being consumed by the explosion of the charge in the Shinyo's bow. Initial surprise was total. The US forces were unaware of the Japanese presence until the first boats to arrive accelerated for their final attack. Shinyos struck *LCI(L)-7*, *LCI(L)-26*, and *LCI(L)-49* in the initial wave as they stood sentinel at the harbor's mouth. All three sank, *LCI(L)-26* taking its 66-man crew with it.

The fight grew general after that. The Shinyos did not attack in a massed wave formation. Rather, they trickled in during the remaining hours of darkness. The US vessels, now aware of their enemy's presence, opened up on the remaining Shinyos. The fire laid down proved deadly to the fragile boats. One LCI(L), *LCI(L)-27*, sank six of the suicide boats. Five were destroyed well away from the vessel, and it did not hit the sixth until it was far too close. The explosion badly damaged *LCI(L)-27*. Two members of its crew were killed by the blast and the landing craft had to be beached to prevent it from sinking. It was later repaired, refloated, and returned to service.

The predawn twilight brought the nightmare to a close. In the strengthening light, the destroyers outside the harbor could finally see the remaining Shinyos. *Conyngham* 1½ miles southwest of Mariveles, spotted a Shinyo at 0700hrs, 20 minutes before sunrise. It engaged and sank the boat. Shortly thereafter, *Young* and *Nicholas* spotted two other Shinyos and sent them to the bottom.

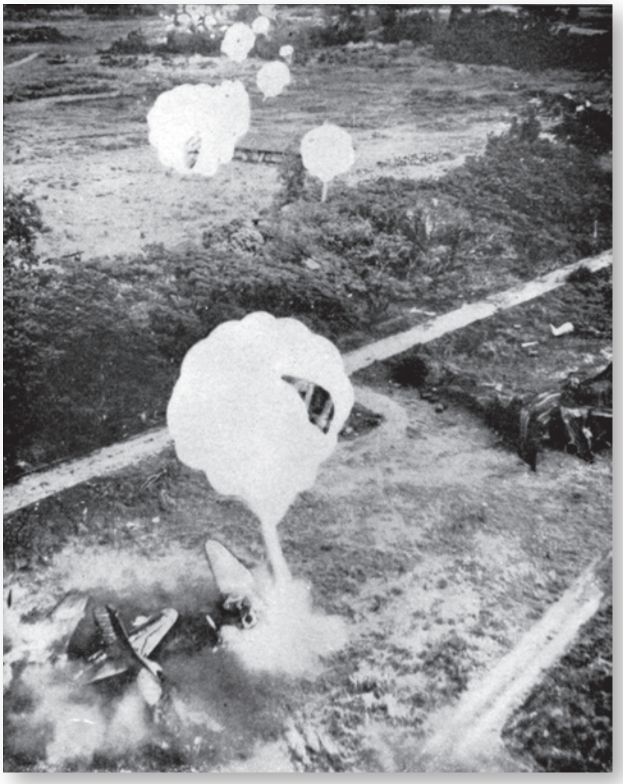
It was the end of a long and terrifying night, but with it came the end of the Shinyo threat. By morning all available Shinyo boats had been expended. It had cost the US three ships sunk and one beached, but the picket line had served its purpose. None of the Shinyos actually entered the harbor, expending themselves on the harbor's guardians. The landing craft intended to lift soldiers to Corregidor had been given a light show by the battle at the harbor's mouth. None had been damaged, and all were available to support the landing. With dawn the curtain was rising on the main event: the invasion of Corregidor.

L-DAY ON CORREGIDOR: FEBRUARY 16, 1945

At 0630hrs a final US prelanding bombardment began. The gunfire support cruisers virtually emptied their main gun magazines over the next 86 minutes. Both sides of the island received attention, as did Caballo Island. Throughout the barrage, Corregidor's guns were silent.

Fourteen minutes after the gunfire ceased, the USAAF's aircraft arrived. At 0800hrs, 24 B-24 heavy bombers appeared, saturating gun positions on Corregidor with fragmentation bombs, deadly against personnel in the open and highly effective against antiaircraft guns. These were 500lb high-explosive bombs wrapped with wire. The wire shredded when the bombs exploded, sending metal fragments flying.

At 0802hrs, 11 twin-engine B-25 medium bombers and 31 A-20 light bombers arrived. They spent the next 26 minutes working over Corregidor and Caballo. The B-25s bombed and strafed antiaircraft positions and strongpoints on Corregidor's south coast. The A-20s attacked defensive positions on Corregidor and Caballo. They dropped bombs, registering direct hits and near-misses on their targets. With their bomb bays empty, they thoroughly strafed the islands. The saturation attack forced Corregidor's defenders deep into their shelters. The garrison had undergone heavy bombardments previously, but none had been as severe or prolonged as experienced on February 16. This, more than any damage inflicted on Corregidor's installations, was the aerial assault's purpose.



The final bombardment of Corregidor involved fragmentation bombs. Normally used against airfields, as shown in this photo of an attack on Clark Field, their purpose at Corregidor was to force the defenders into their shelters, something they succeeded in doing. (AC)

One minute after the last of the B-25s and A-20s departed, a formation of 51 more twin-engine aircraft arrived. The fat-bellied aircraft were flying low, 600ft above the crest of Topside. The garrison assumed they were more medium bombers. They looked like Japanese twin-engine Betty bombers. The garrison remained in their shelters until these aircraft unloaded their contents.

This formation consisted of two columns of C-47 transports carrying the 3rd Battalion, 503rd PRCT and support units. For the next hour the Douglas Skytrains unloaded paratroopers, and drop bundles containing their heavy weapons and supplies, on Topside.

Twenty-five aircraft dropped men and weapons on Drop Zone A, the former Parade Ground. Twenty-six unloaded over Drop Zone B, the Golf Course. Colonel Jones was aboard one of the C-47s, observing the result of each drop, and adjusting subsequent drops to improve accuracy.

The first stick of US paratroopers jumped at 600ft, led by Lieutenant-Colonel John Erickson, commanding 3rd Battalion. High winds blew this stick past the drop zones into rocks and debris south of it. A few of the early jumpers were carried beyond Topside, landing on the cliff sides or in the South China Sea, south of Corregidor. PT boats stationed south of the drop zone against this eventuality plucked nine fortunate paratroopers from the sea.

Seeing the results of the first drop, Jones ordered the jump height lowered to 400ft. It helped, but not enough. Many men and bundles going out in the early drops still missed the drop zone, landing on Topside, short of the cliffs. Subsequent drops compensated for the unexpectedly high gusts by having jump masters for each C-47 delay departure of a stick by five to ten seconds after the jump light turned green, giving permission to jump.

Each plane carried 10–24 men and up to nine drop bundles. The drop bundles contained artillery, heavy machine guns, extra equipment, and ammunition. Their parachutes were color-coded to facilitate recovery. On every pass over the drop zone six to eight men jumped or up to eight drop bundles went out the door. Most C-47s made three passes over their drop zone.

In all, 1,007 personnel—a 75mm pack howitzer battery, a .50-cal. machine-gun platoon, equipment for the engineering platoon, the 3rd Battalion's headquarters, and elements of the regimental headquarters—landed on Topside. Regimental headquarters included Colonel Jones. He jumped near the end of the drop, satisfied the troops were hitting the landing zone.

The first wave of US paratroopers descends on Topside. The Japanese had discounted the ability of the US to land paratroopers on Topside, an error that cost them dearly. (US Army)

Among those landing in the first wave were several men who never previously made a parachute jump, including a five-man signal corps photo team, a JASCO communications team to coordinate naval gunfire, an observer for the Armed Forces Far East Board, and Harold Templeman, the American Red Cross Field Director. He arrived armed with a coffee pot to set up a Red Cross canteen. (The presence of the photographers meant this became one of the best photo-documented battles of the Philippines campaign.)

The entire drop took 105 minutes. Despite the length of the drop, there was no antiaircraft fire, and the majority of injuries sustained during the jump appear to have been landing accidents. Surprise was complete. There was no organized resistance; only individual actions by paratroopers against Japanese soldiers who happened to be where a paratrooper landed.

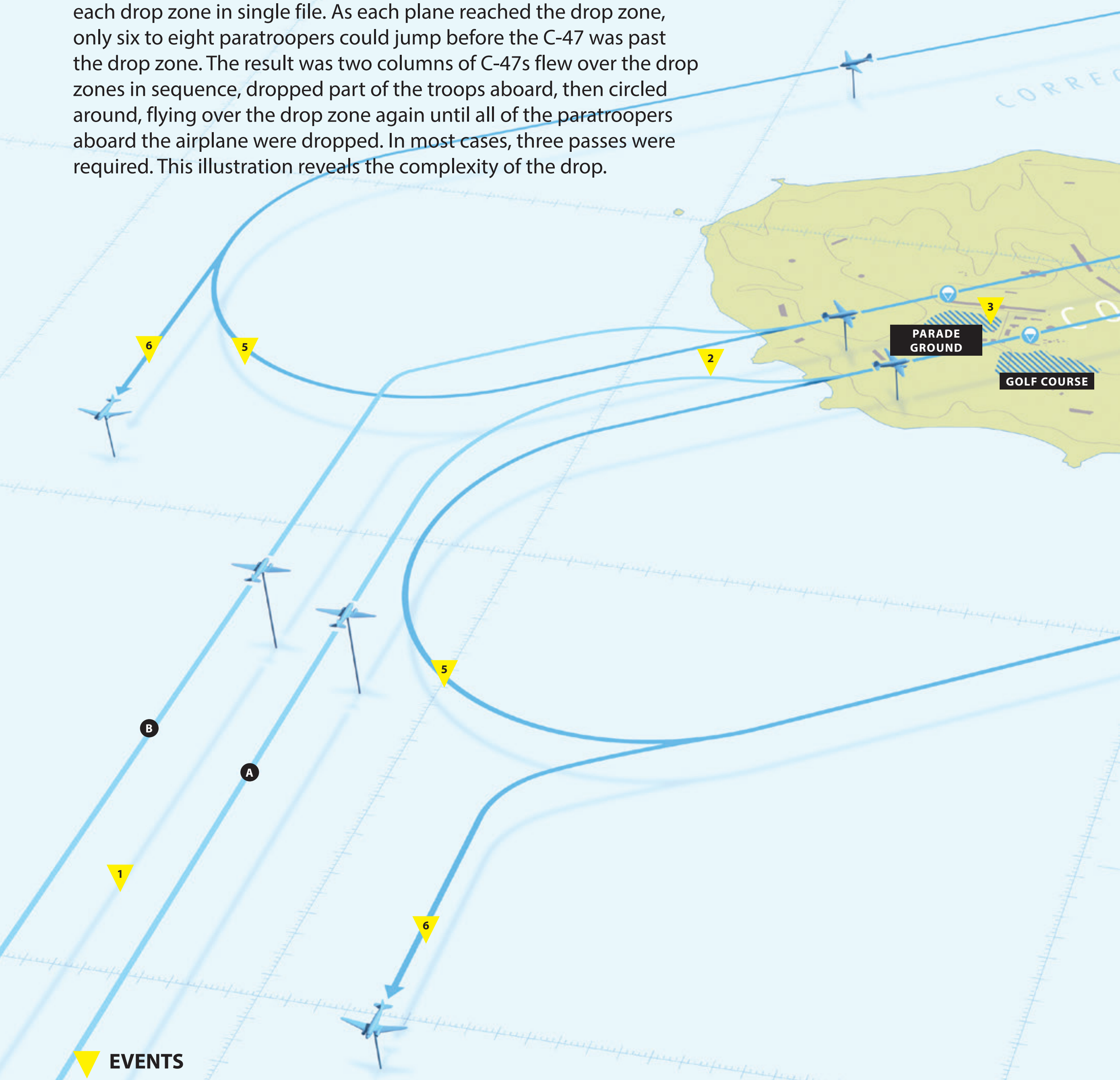
Jones expected 20 percent landing casualties, but feared they could run as high as 50 percent. In addition to the nine men blown off the island and recovered by PT boats, a further 214 were killed, missing, or severely injured when landing (just over 200 of these were injured). Total casualties were 25 percent, a little over Jones's expected 20 percent, but well below his worst fears. Several paratroopers were shot and killed by the Japanese while landing, Most of these landed in the cliff near Japanese strongpoints.

Once on the ground, men discarded parachutes, collected equipment, and headed towards designated rally points. Usually, men in a stick gathered together for mutual support before moving to the rally point. They ran into relatively little Japanese resistance.

One exception was a group of men which missed the Golf Course drop zone, and landed between the cliffs and the Golf Course near Geary Point. They were probably from several different sticks, men who jumped early in each stick and were blown south by wind gusts. Between 0900hrs and 0930hrs, while heading to the rally point, they were fired upon by Japanese at an observation post (OP). The paratroopers instinctively and aggressively engaged the Japanese. Most of the Japanese were officers armed only with side arms. The paratroopers, with superior infantry

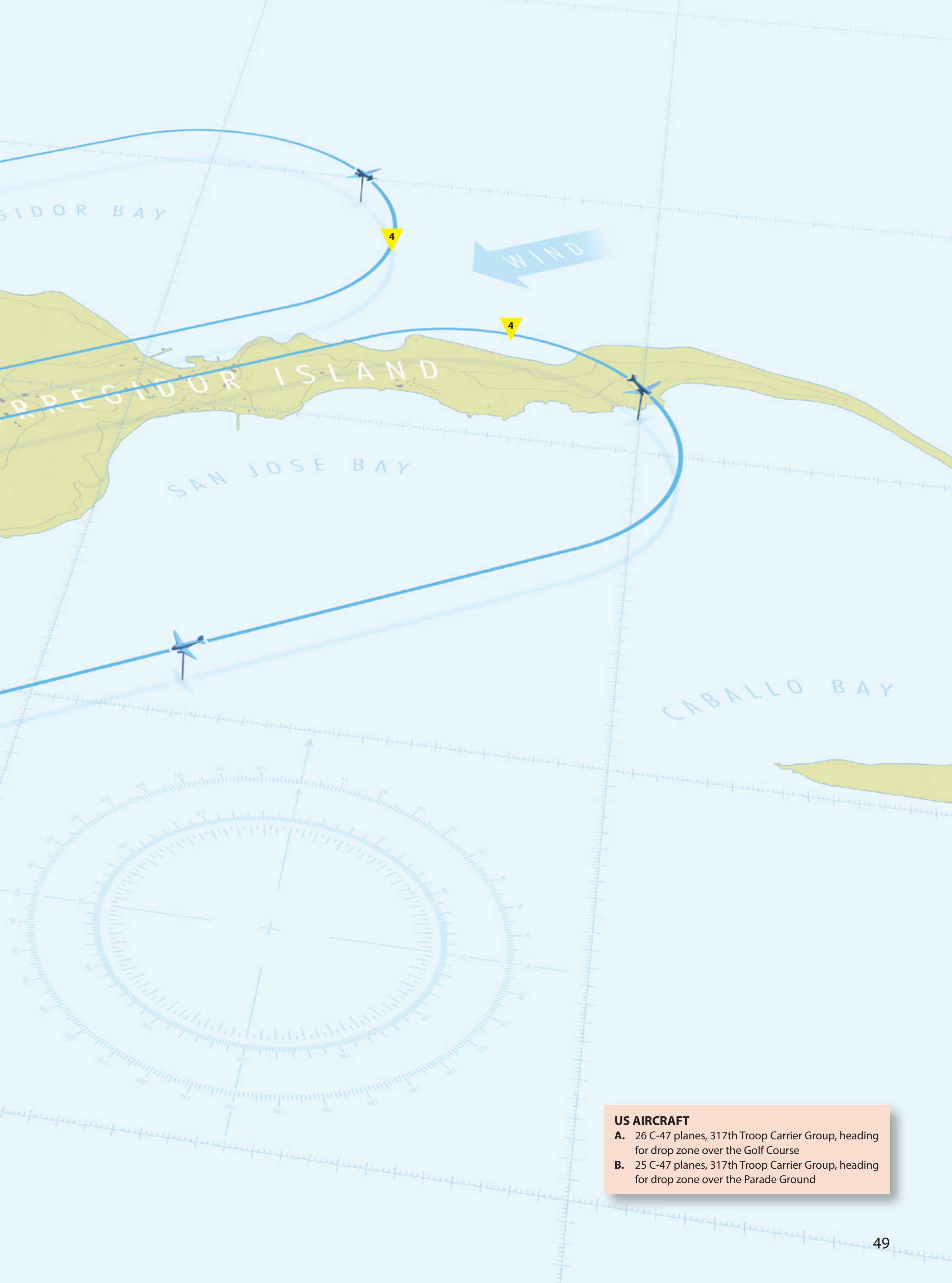
THE CORREGIDOR AIRDROP

The airdrop used at Corregidor was unique. Since the drop zones were so small, a unique drop procedure was used. The C-47s approached each drop zone in single file. As each plane reached the drop zone, only six to eight paratroopers could jump before the C-47 was past the drop zone. The result was two columns of C-47s flew over the drop zones in sequence, dropped part of the troops aboard, then circled around, flying over the drop zone again until all of the paratroopers aboard the airplane were dropped. In most cases, three passes were required. This illustration reveals the complexity of the drop.



EVENTS

1. Two columns of C-47s approach Topside from McGuire Field on Mindoro.
2. The C-47s descend to the drop altitude of 600ft above Topside (*c*.1,200ft altitude).
3. They begin to drop paratroopers and bundles on the drop zone, descending further to 400ft above Topside after the first sticks drop.
4. After clearing Corregidor, the C-47 columns turn in opposite directions to drop again.
5. Aircraft with paratroopers and bundles aboard make second (and third) passes over Topside to drop men and materiel.
6. The empty C-47s return to McGuire Field on Mindoro.


SIDOR BAY
4
WIND
4
RREGIDOR ISLAND
SAN JOSE BAY
CABALLO BAY

US AIRCRAFT

- **A.** 26 C-47 planes, 317th Troop Carrier Group, heading for drop zone over the Golf Course
- **B.** 25 C-47 planes, 317th Troop Carrier Group, heading for drop zone over the Parade Ground

tactical training and better firepower, quickly killed all but one man in the OP. That man surrendered. He was Captain Itagaki's Korean orderly. Itagaki and his command staff were in the OP to observe the progress of the landing craft carrying the 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry to their landing zone at Bottomside. When the paratroopers attacked the OP, the 3rd Battalion was south of Geary Point about an hour from reaching San Jose. This chance encounter at the OP decapitated the Japanese command structure on Corregidor.

The airdrop had a second unexpected benefit. Itagaki planned to run the battle from a command center on Topside, near the 503rd PRCT's drop zones. Secure communication lines ran from all Corregidor strongpoints to this command post. However, control had depended on holding this command post, which quickly fell into enemy hands. Losing the garrison's commander left it leaderless. Losing the communications network left the various Japanese outposts isolated, unable to communicate and coordinate counterattacks.

Two 503rd PRCT paratroopers climb up a flagpole on Topside under fire to raise the US colors. While the flag-raising attended by Douglas MacArthur is better known, to most Corregidor veterans this was the flag-raising that counted. (AC)

By 0930hrs the first drop achieved all three of its objectives. It secured the drop zones for the second airdrop, obtained a base for further operations on Topside once the 2nd Battalion, 503rd PRCT landed, and could provide fire support for the landing of the 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry. The paratroopers had established a defensive perimeter around both drop zones which linked them together. They also emplaced two of the dropped .50-cal. machine guns to provide a base of fire to protect Black Beach.

The 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry departed Mariveles Harbor aboard 52 LCMs at 0830hrs, just as the first paratroopers were touching down on Topside. They followed a circuitous route to reach Black Beach well west and south of Corregidor. The convoy crawled along at 6 knots. By 0930hrs lead elements were past the head of Corregidor and were ready to make their final approach to Black Beach. Three destroyers provided fire support—*Wickes* north of Corregidor opposite North Pier, and *Pickering* and *Young* on the south side, opposite the beach. All three conducted a preliminary bombardment from 0942hrs until 1020hrs. When they lifted fire, the destroyers had fired 1,200 5in./38-cal. rounds at the beach, the cliffs of Topside and Middleside, Malinta Hill, and any visible strongpoints that could endanger landing troops.

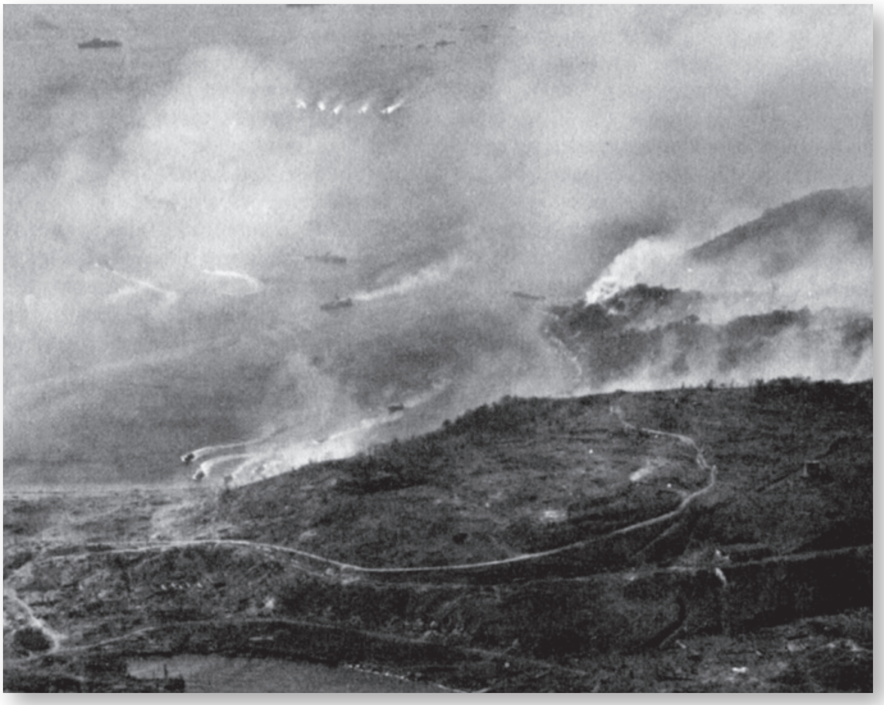
At 1022hrs, as the first wave approached Black Beach, Japanese guns on Caballo opened up on the Corregidor-bound flotilla. *Pickering* and *Young* moved in and opened fire on the Japanese battery, peppering the Japanese positions with shells from the destroyers' 5in. main guns, and 40mm mounts. The Japanese battery, stopped almost as quickly as it began firing. It never resumed firing. No damage was done to the flotilla.

Black Beach measured only 230 yards across and 10 yards deep. Beyond the beach was a collection of bombed-out buildings, bomb craters, cliffs, and hills. At the eastern edge there was no beach, just the rise of Malinta Hill. The first wave beached at 1028hrs, two minutes ahead of schedule. LCI(R)s, armed with rockets, fired a final barrage just before the troops began unloading. Additionally, the 40mm and 3in. guns on the landing vessels put down suppressive fire.

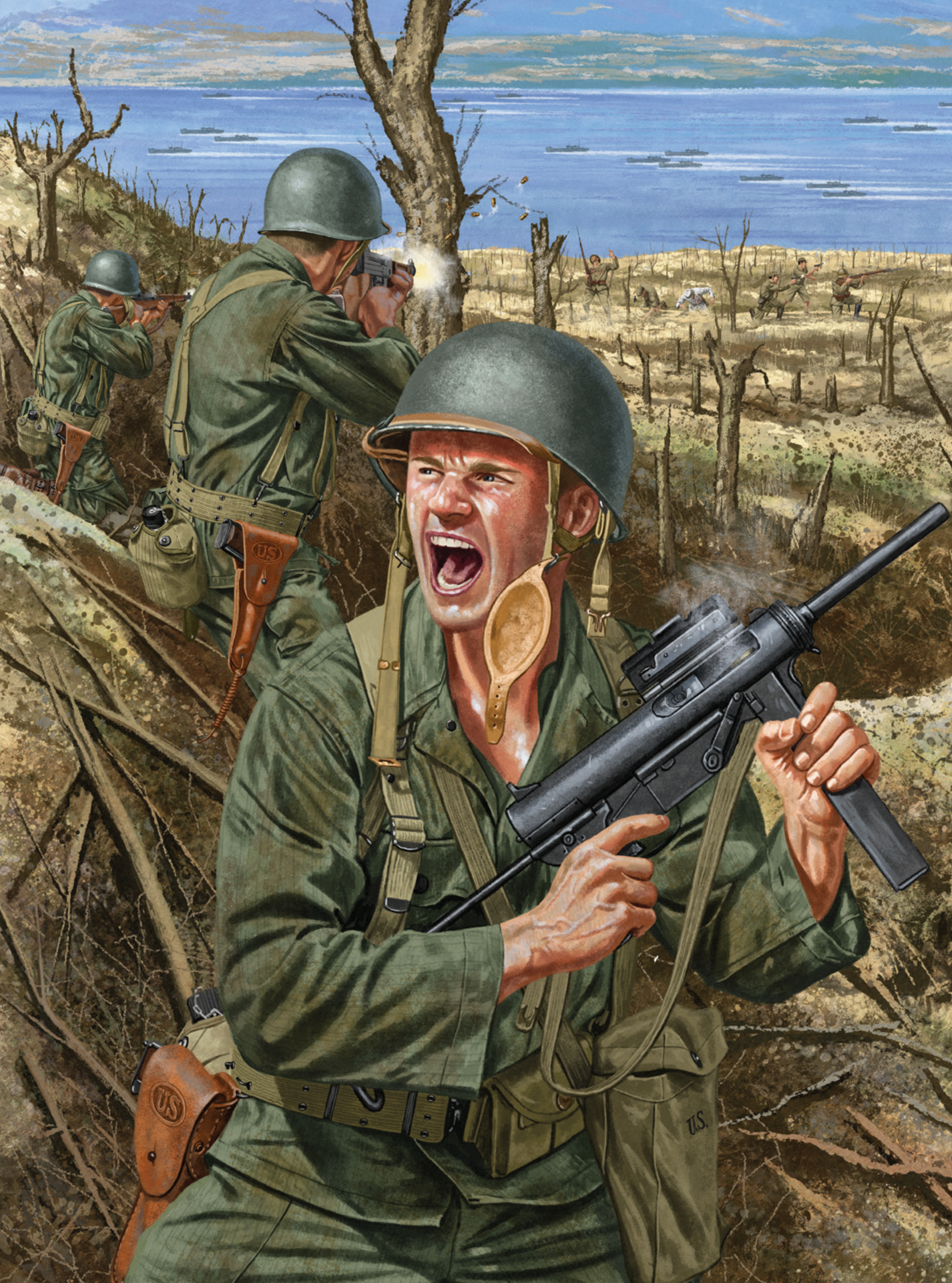
Initially, there was no resistance. The defenders were either still too stunned to respond, busy dealing with the 503rd PRCT, or simply holding fire. Since the garrison was largely naval, they may have been following the tradition that a ship does not open fire until ordered by the captain. Itagaki planned his defense as an intricately organized and timed ambush. Many may have awaited an open-fire order that could never come from their now-dead commander.

Not until the fifth and final wave approached did the surviving defenders recover from their shock. They realized if they did not shoot then, they would not get a future chance. They opened up with everything available, but the Japanese heavy weapons were quickly silenced by return fire from the supporting destroyers and the landing ships.

It was too late for the Japanese; their defenses around Black Beach were already overrun. K and L companies of the 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry unloaded in the first two waves. They maneuvered around the ruins of San Jose, and up Malinta Hill. Resistance on the hill was disorganized and ineffective. By 1100hrs, 30 minutes after the landing began, the two companies had Malinta Hill secured.



Two hours after paratroopers began touching down on Topside, the 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry prepared to land on Bottomside. This photo shows the first wave and following waves of landing craft approaching Black Beach. (US Army)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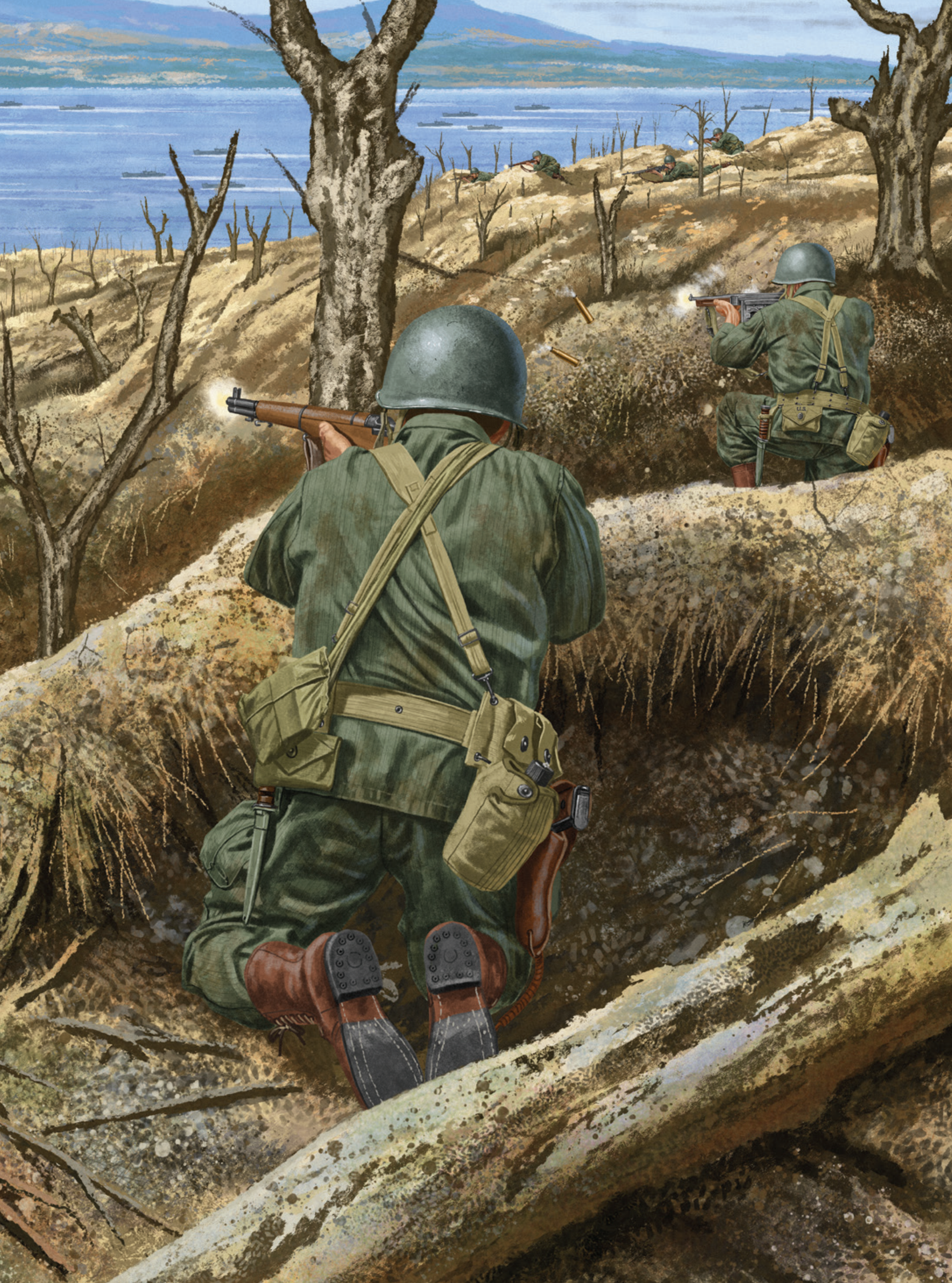
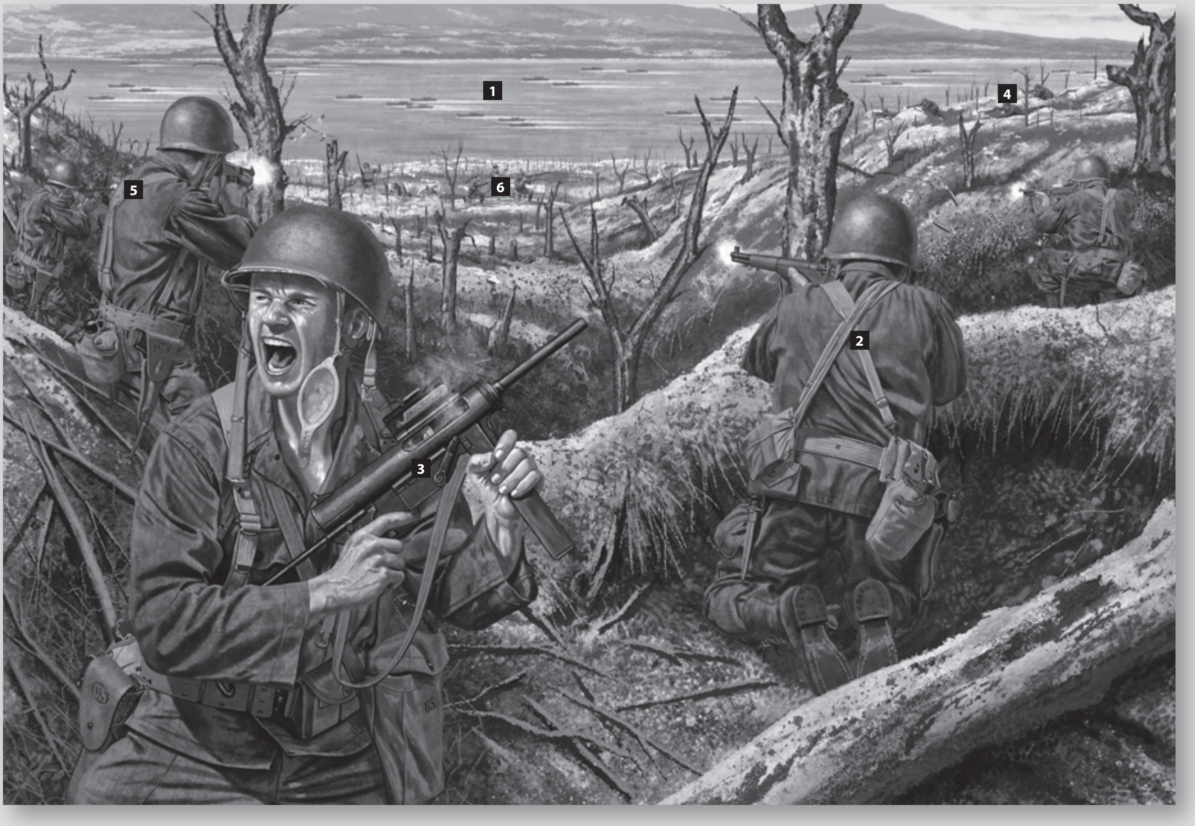




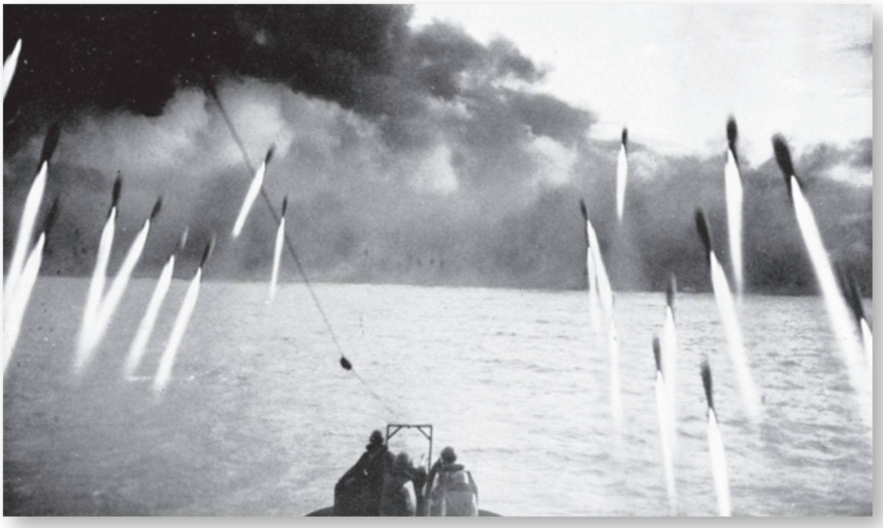
CAPTAIN ITAGAKI'S COMMAND STAFF IS WIPED OUT ON TOPSIDE (PP. 52–53)

When the US airdrop began, Captain Akira Itagaki, was at an observation post on the north side of Topside. It was well away from his central command post. He was observing the amphibious approach of the 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry (**1**) to their Black Beach landing zone. This was the invasion he was expecting. What he was not expecting was an airdrop on Topside.

Some of the US paratroopers (**2**) were blown off course by high winds, and landed around his position. Some of Itagaki's party, perhaps even Itagaki himself, shot at these paratroopers. This was ill advised because Itagaki's party was made up mainly of officers, who were not properly armed for ground combat. The enlisted guards may have had rifles, but these were bolt-action Arisaka rifles. All shooting at the paratroopers did was alert them to the presence of the Japanese troops.

The paratroopers were well armed with automatic and semiautomatic weapons, such as the M3 .45-cal. submachine gun shown here (**3**). They were trained to display individual initiative and unwilling to leave an enemy force in their rear. The paratroopers in the area chose to counterattack the Japanese position.

While conjectural, the attack probably went as shown in this reconstruction. The paratroopers most likely split into two groups, with one group laying down a base of fire to pin and distract the enemy (**4**). The second group attacked the unware Japanese from the flank (**5**). The outcome was that every member of Itagaki's command staff (**6**) was killed except for one Korean orderly. He took shelter, surrendered, and later revealed who had been killed. The Japanese command on Corregidor had been decapitated in the first minutes of the invasion of the Rock.



Just before landing, Black Beach was softened up by LCI(R)s, like this one, firing salvos of 5in. rockets. (AC)

Next to land was I Company, securing the beachhead. Its men were followed by the rest of the battalion and attached support units. This was when casualties started mounting. The beaches were mined, but the mines were visible. Infantry avoided them, walking around them. Heavy vehicles could not. A tank and a bulldozer that unloaded in the first wave struck mines almost immediately and were disabled. An M7 self-propelled 105mm howitzer, a truck, and a 37mm antitank gun followed, and were destroyed by mines or enemy gunfire.

The 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry established a firm lodgment on Bottomside by noon. Japanese resistance was only coming from machine guns and light cannon positions on Ramsey Ravine and Breakwater Point and the cliff at San Jose Point on Malinta Hill. These guns were soon silenced by naval gunfire. Shore party spotters identified their locations, and directed naval gunfire on the positions. Destroyers firing single 5in. and 40mm rounds at close range took them out.

The defenders' woes increased at 1230hrs, when the 3rd Battalion, 503rd PRCT was reinforced. The C-47s of the 317th Troop Carrier Group had flown back to McGuire Field on Mindoro, refueled, and loaded up the 2nd Battalion, 503rd PRCT, the 503rd PRCT's Service Company, another battery of pack howitzers, and a 0.50-cal. machine-gun platoon.

There had been discussion on Topside about the second lift. The winds had picked up. Several officers on the scene recommended scrubbing the second drop in view of the high landing casualties of the first wave. By this time part of the second lift was already airborne. Jones decided a counterorder canceling the airdrop was likely to lead to disorder, so no action was taken to stop the drop.

The first C-47s arrived at 1240hrs, 25 minutes behind schedule. They were 400ft above Topside. Despite the higher winds than that morning, most of the men and bundles arriving in the second lift landed in their designated drop zones. They suffered significantly fewer drop casualties than the first lift. Where the first drop experienced a drop casualty rate over 20 percent, the second drop's was less than 5 percent. It was a testimony to the 317th Troop Carrier Group's ability to quickly adjust to landing conditions. Total jump casualties for both drops stood at 14 percent.

The 317th Troop Carrier Group made a second airdrop on Topside at 1240hrs. While the first drop went unopposed, antiaircraft fire greeted the second. Here, ground crews examine the damage to a hit C-47 after its return to McGuire Field. (DVDIS)

Unlike the first drop, which went unopposed by the Japanese, the second drop drew antiaircraft fire. A Japanese 20mm cannon was brought into action, damaging several of the C-47s. Two .50-cal. machine guns also opened up. Both were US machine guns dropped during the first lift, which fell outside the landing zone. Recovered by the Japanese, they were put into service against their original owners. The Japanese also spent more effort firing at descending paratroopers on the second drop. Most of the eight paratroopers killed and the 50 wounded by enemy fire during both drops were hit in the second drop.

The second drop took less time than the first drop. All men and bundles were unloaded in approximately an hour. One result was paratroopers and drop bundles were at greater risk of landing on other paratroopers as the jump zone became crowded with new arrivals. The drop zone became more crowded still when a supply lift arrived at 1400hrs. Twelve C-47s dropped ammunition, rations, and water.

The two battalions quickly sorted themselves out and began taking control of Topside. The three companies of the 2nd Battalion occupied a 200-degree arc of the defensive perimeter and provided perimeter defense to the south and west of the drop zones.

H Company, 3rd Battalion assembled on the Parade Ground, and cleared the ruins of the barracks just north of the Parade Ground of the few Japanese present. They then pushed 300 yards north, and secured the wrecked hospital. One platoon thrust 600 yards to the northeast to seize a knoll on Morrison Hill that dominated the northeast section of Topside. I Company backfilled H Company at the hospital.

G Company pushed east, down slopes connecting Topside to Middleside. They soon occupied a knoll overlooking the head of Ramsey Ravine. The ravine itself was a Japanese strongpoint, one of the draws fortified to prevent amphibious access to Topside. The position was only 250 yards west of the closest elements of the 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry. The amphibious and airborne elements had not joined hands yet, but they were close.

By 1500hrs the 503rd PRCT troops on Topside held their designated landing-day objectives. Between then and dusk, some three hours later, they consolidated their position on Topside. Aggressive patrolling continued throughout late afternoon, revealing the Japanese had their greatest strength in the cliffs and draws west and south of Topside.

The paratroopers now held the high ground above the defenders. The Japanese heavy weapons in the draws around Topside—those which survived bombardment by US destroyers—pointed the wrong way. The Japanese had to attack uphill against a sheltered enemy that was better armed. The 503rd PRCT began digging in, preparing for possible night counterattacks by the Japanese.

By early afternoon on February 16, the 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry had full control of Malinta Hill (seen in the distance, framed between two paratroopers). The Japanese inside the Malinta Tunnel complex underneath Malinta Hill were trapped by the US soldiers atop it. (US Army)

On Bottomside, the 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry was consolidating its hold. It had two companies atop Malinta Hill, covering the exits from the Malinta Tunnel complex. The Japanese there were trapped, unable to exit without being cut down by US soldiers. I Company had pushed to the north shore of Bottomside, clearing the ruins of San Jose of Japanese defenders. They swung west after reaching the shore and established defensive positions at the entrance to Middleside on the north side of Corregidor. A Company similarly pushed west into Middleside along the south shore. The two companies split the defense of their left flank halfway between the two shores.

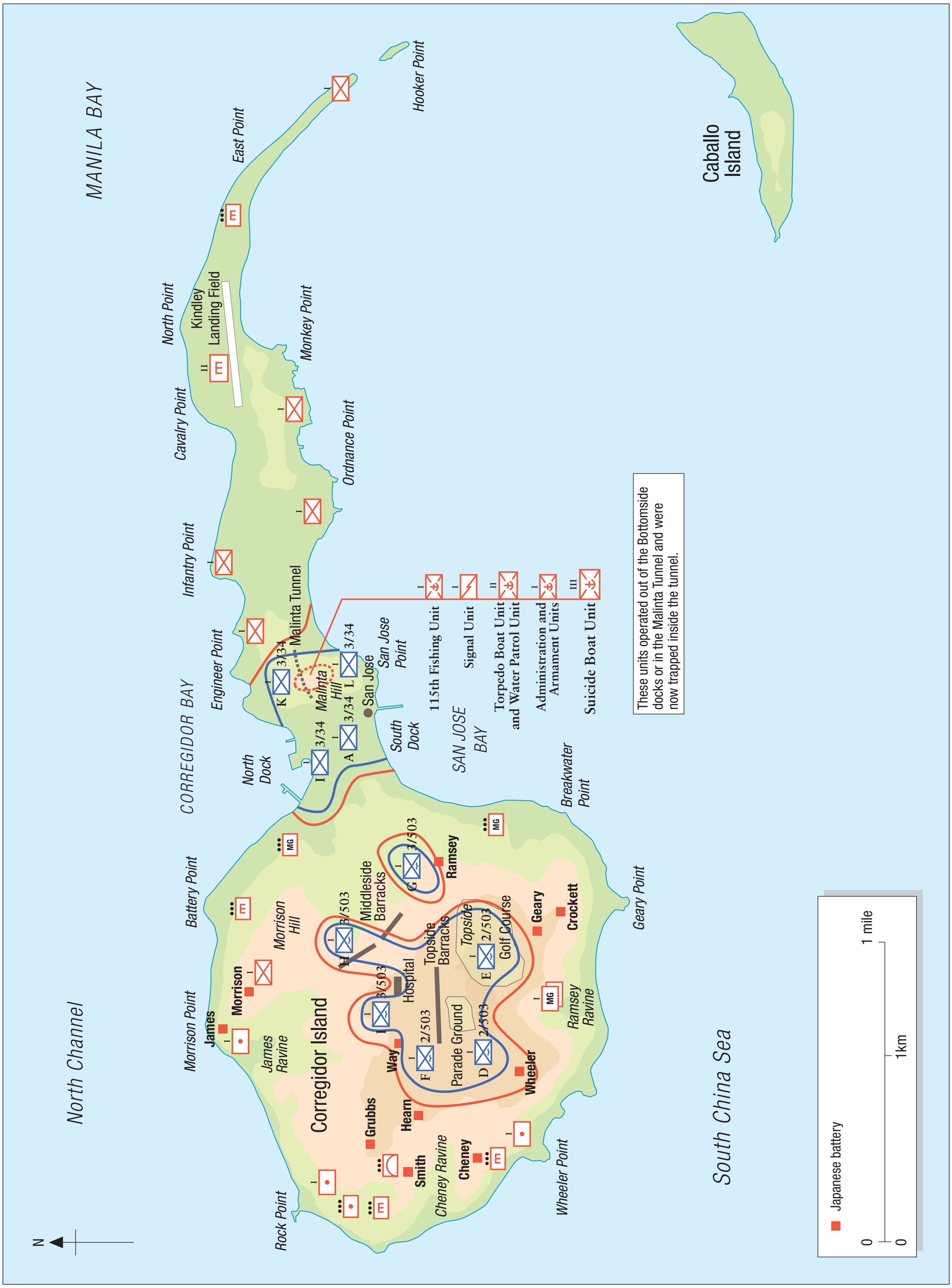
Lieutenant-Colonel Edward M. Postlethwait, commanding the 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry and the amphibious forces, was turning Bottomside into a base. A field hospital was set up, as were a headquarters and a communications post. Supplies were unloaded and cached. Landing facilities were improved. The artillery sent with the battalion was set up in a battery where it could support offensive operations during the following days.

As evening approached, Colonel Jones felt confident about the situation. Two solid footholds had been established on Corregidor, even if they had not yet linked up. The US controlled the center of Topside. With Bottomside firmly in US hands, Jones decided to cancel the airdrop of the 1st Battalion, 503rd PRCT, scheduled for the following morning. Opposition had proved lighter than expected. There was no need for further jump casualties. The battalion could be brought in by landing craft at Bottomside. He radioed the recommendation to Sixth Army Headquarters, with a further request that only supplies be dropped the following day. The request was approved. A message was sent to McGuire Field on Mindoro rerouting the 1st Battalion.

The Japanese defenders were scattered, disorganized, and leaderless. At least 2,000 men of the garrison were in Malinta Tunnel, trapped under the US soldiers holding the hilltop, effectively out of the fight. Another 2,500 were scattered around the periphery of Corregidor's bulbous west end. The rest of the Japanese garrison was dotted uselessly along Corregidor's eastern tail, guarding against a nonexistent threat from the sea.

While the surviving Japanese were well protected, their fortifications pointed the wrong way; outwards instead of inwards, downwards to the

Night positions, February 16, 1945


MANILA BAY
North Channel
CORREGIDOR BAY
SAN JOSE BAY
South China Sea
Corregidor Island
Caballo Island
Hooker Point
East Point
Monkey Point
North Point
Kindley Landing Field
Cavalry Point
Ordnance Point
Infantry Point
Engineer Point
Malinta Tunnel
Malinta Hill
San Jose Point
San Jose
South Dock
North Dock
Breakwater Point
Battery Point
Morrison Hill
Morrison Point
James Ravine
Middleside Barracks
Topside Barracks
Hospital
Parade Ground
Topside Golf Course
Ramsey Ravine
Geary Point
Wheeler Point
Cheney Ravine
Rock Point
115th Fishing Unit
Signal Unit
Torpedo Boat Unit and Water Patrol Unit
Administration and Armament Units
Suicide Boat Unit
K 3/34
L 3/34
A 3/34
I 3/34
G 3/503
H 3/503
I 3/503
E 2/503
F 2/503
D 2/503
James
Morrison
Grubbs
Hearn
Way
Smith
Cheney
Wheeler
Ramsey
Geary
Crockett
E
MG
Japanese battery
0
1 mile
1km
N

These units operated out of the Bottomside docks or in the Malinta Tunnel and were now trapped inside the tunnel.

sea instead of upwards to Topside. The Japanese defenses had become completely irrelevant. Moreover, there was no way to coordinate the type of simultaneous, multi-pronged counterattacks required to drive the US troops off Topside.

The US gamble on an "impossible" airdrop on Topside paid off. It required a pair of airdrops combined with an amphibious landing, all of which had to be closely coordinated. Yet everything that needed to go right had gone right that day. While a lot of hard fighting remained, US forces had broken the back of Japanese resistance on Corregidor on February 16.

CONSOLIDATION ON CORREGIDOR: FEBRUARY 17–20, 1945

As January 17 dawned over Corregidor, both sides prepared to renew the battle. The night had passed relatively quietly. US forces on Topside and Bottomside had withdrawn to defensive night positions, preparing for a Japanese counterattack. The Japanese on their part were still in a state of disorder. They had not recovered from the shock of the first day's battle. They still outnumbered the US forces, but they were scattered. Communications between the individual pockets of Japanese had not been restored. No one was yet ready to take the initiative and attack the Americans.

The sole exception was on Malinta Hill. There the Japanese launched a series of small, but determined, counterattacks on the north side of Malinta Hill. The US lost ten soldiers killed; however, at daybreak the US defenders counted 35 Japanese bodies from their hilltop positions. As many as 20 other Japanese troops may have been injured, as there were numerous blood trails.

With sunrise, the 503rd PRCT went on the attack. At daybreak they were resupplied. Forty B-24s dropped supply bundles on Topside. Sixteen were hit by Japanese antiaircraft fire, but the damage suffered was slight. However, in firing, the Japanese revealed their positions. They were silenced permanently. The paratroopers used everything from carbines to 75mm pack howitzers, and reinforced that counterfire by calling in naval gunfire.

At 0730hrs two attacks were launched. The 3rd Battalion began a coordinated assault on Morrison Hill to its northeast, while 2nd Battalion made an attack on the Battery Wheeler area on the southwest side of the US positions. Controlling Morrison Hill was key to linking up with the 34th Infantry Regiment. It overlooked North Dock. Battery Wheeler's prewar fortifications had been converted into a strongpoint. US probes revealed it, too, possessed a large Japanese garrison.

Other teams began clearing tunnels and caves within the US Topside perimeter, eliminating any Japanese troops huddling in them. This was small-unit work. A flamethrower team and .50-cal. machine-gun team provided support for a demolition team to seal

Two 34th Infantry Regiment soldiers man a machine gun on Malinta Hill on February 17, 1945. Small contingents of Japanese troops attempted to exit Malinta Tunnel during the night of February 16/17, only to be forced back by 34th Infantry soldiers. (US Army)

Day two of the invasion was marked by several supply airdrops, including this one. These runs provided critically needed ammunition, rations, and water. They were not intended as the main source of supply for the 503rd PRCT, however. (US Army)

the cave or tunnel, while an infantry squad provided security against snipers. There were relatively few Japanese on this part of Topside, but there were numerous places for them to hide.

At 0830hrs a formation of 51 C-47s flew over Corregidor's Topside drop zones. The planes were carrying the third lift of the 503rd PRCT. Orders canceling that morning's drop did not reach McGuire Field until the 1st Battalion and the rest of the third lift were putting on their parachutes, and boarding aircraft to make the drop. The C-47s were fueled and loading was underway. Major Robert "Pug" Woods, commanding 1st Battalion, decided the simplest thing was to fly the mission more or less as planned. He decided to have the flight go over Corregidor, but it would only drop equipment bundles. That would save his men humping the ammunition and heavy equipment across the beach. The paratroopers would remain aboard, and fly to a rendezvous with the fast naval transports that would carry them to Corregidor. Since the 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry successfully landed the day before, Woods assumed the landing would be unopposed.

The drop over Corregidor went smoothly. There was no antiaircraft fire during it. Instead, the paratroopers aboard the C-47s remained spectators as the circling transports sent drop bundles down to their destinations. The paratroopers on Topside easily recovered the bundles. After that was accomplished, the Skytrains set course northwards, taking the almost fully loaded transports carrying the troops to San Marcelino Airfield, near Subic Bay. A prewar field, it had just reopened following its recapture by the Sixth Army. From there, the paratroopers were trucked to Subic Bay, and loaded aboard APDs, fast transports converted from old flush-deck destroyers, equipped with LCVPs. While old, the APDs could cruise at 20 knots. They steamed from Subic to Corregidor, unloading at Black Beach at 1630hrs. The paratroopers arrived eight hours later than if they had jumped in, but they avoided jump casualties.

The 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry had two objectives that morning: hold their right flank, anchored on Malinta Hill; and link up with the 503rd PRCT on their left flank.

They had a solid grip to their east, having occupied Malinta Hill shortly after landing. The hill was covered with prewar concrete strongpoints and OPs. US troops occupied these, giving them commanding fields of fire. In particular, artillery observers set up shop in one known as Base End Station B-23. It had been used by the US garrison in 1942 to defend against the Japanese, and resumed that role on February 17. It offered a dominating view of the entire island, allowing the forward observers to call down fire wherever needed.

The Japanese inside the Malinta tunnel complex were trapped. All of the exits were soon known. Several had been sealed by bombardment or demolition charges, K and L Companies had the minor exits on Malinta Hill under observation, and the main western entrance, which overlooked the landing beach, had been sealed by 8in. naval artillery fire the previous day.

The remaining companies of the 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry concentrated on their second objective: linking up with the 503rd PRCT. They began securing the roads leading up Middleside to Topside. This involved much the same effort the 503rd PRCT was going through to clear the Japanese from Topside.

The two forces linked up by mid-afternoon. It was a tenuous link initially. The first vehicle to make the round trip was armored, the surviving M7 self-propelled howitzer. Its mission was not to provide fire support, but rather to run water to the paratroopers, and (more importantly) evacuate badly wounded paratroopers to the beachhead where they could be treated in a fully equipped field hospital or evacuated to Luzon, if necessary. The M7 was chosen because its open top allowed stretcher cases to be carried, while its armored sides were protection against the rifle fire and grenade fragments to which it was exposed.

An M7 self-propelled howitzer made the first round-trip run from the 34th Infantry on Bottomside to the 503rd PRCT on Topside. This run was made under small-arms fire, but the vehicle was able to successfully bring water to the 503rd and evacuate wounded to the beach. (US Army)

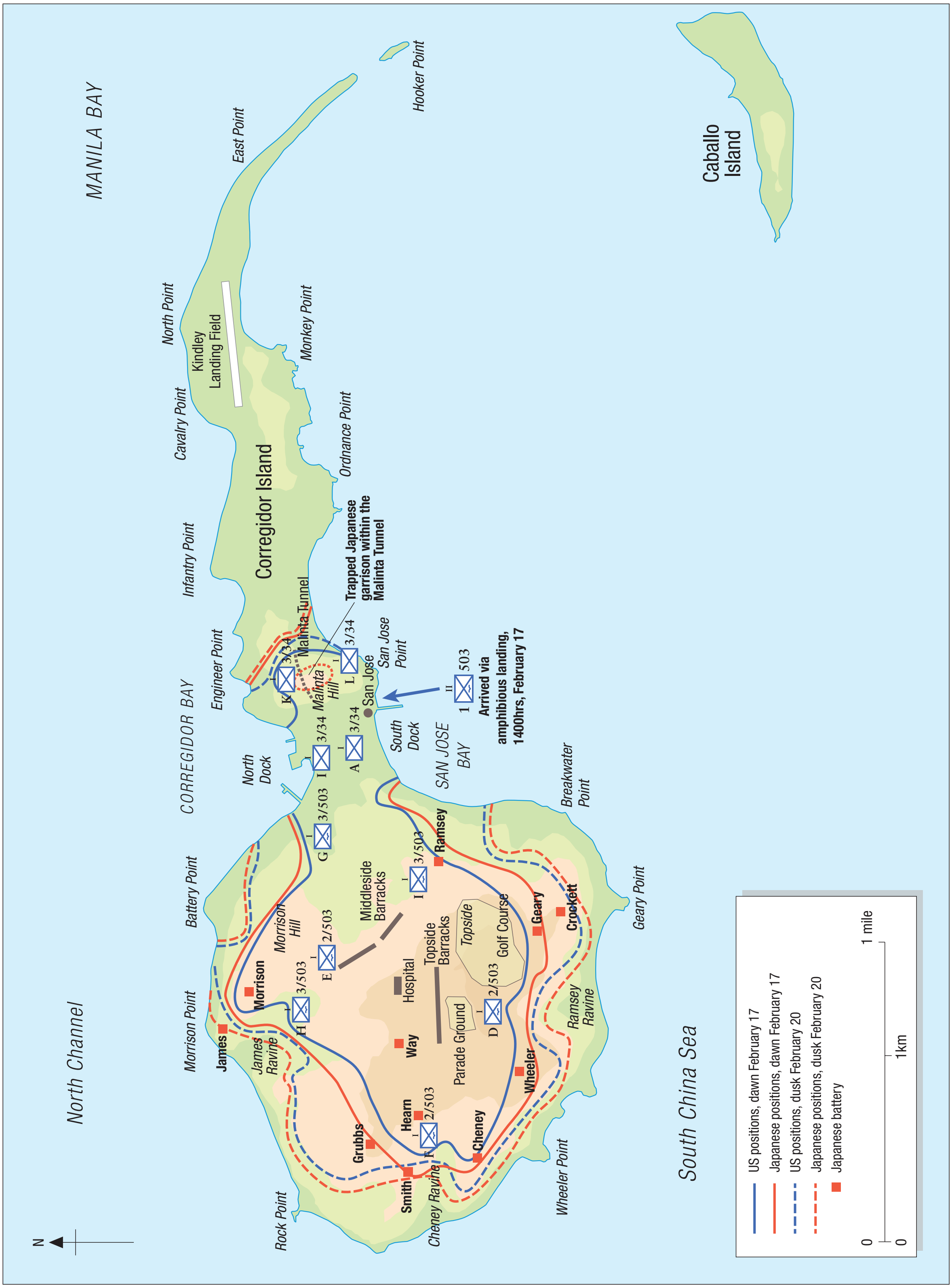
Most of the fights in which the 503rd PRCT and 34th Infantry engaged during the first day were small-unit battles, the US pitting platoons or squads against Japanese entrenched in pillboxes, inactive battery fortifications, or other defensive strongpoints.

The 1st Battalion, 503rd PRCT arrived around the time the M7 returned to Black Beach. Major Woods discovered his assumptions about facing a tamed beach were optimistic. Just as they had the previous day, two Japanese heavy machine guns in Ramsey Ravine and at Breakwater Point opened up on the approaching LCVP. Once again, US Navy warships, including the ADPs (which carried 4in. guns forward) that had lifted the 1st Battalion, suppressed the enemy fire. The enemy fire was high and inaccurate, but it managed to kill six of the 1,000-plus men arriving at Corregidor.

The 1st Battalion's pack howitzers and heavy machine guns, along with their reserve ammunition and other supplies, were on Topside, where they had been dropped earlier that day. The paratroopers had their personal weapons and the ammunition they would have dropped with, so they could fight as light infantry. They fought their way up Middleside, reunited with their weapons, and became the regimental reserve.

With the 503rd PRCT at full strength, the 503rd PRCT and 1st Battalion, 34th Infantry set boundaries. The 503rd PRCT took responsibility for

The advance of US forces on Corregidor, February 17–20, 1945


MANILA BAY
North Channel
CORREGIDOR BAY
SAN JOSE BAY
South China Sea
N
Corregidor Island
Caballo Island
Hooker Point
East Point
North Point
Kindley Landing Field
Monkey Point
Cavalry Point
Ordnance Point
Infantry Point
Engineer Point
Malinta Tunnel
Trapped Japanese garrison within the Malinta Tunnel
Malinta Hill
San Jose Point
San Jose
K 3/34
L 3/34
I 3/34
A 3/34
1 503
Arrived via amphibious landing, 1400hrs, February 17
North Dock
South Dock
Breakwater Point
Battery Point
G 3/503
Morrison Hill
Morrison
Morrison Point
E 2/503
Middleside Barracks
I 3/503
Ramsey
H 3/503
Hospital
Topside Barracks
Topside
Golf Course
Geary
Crockett
Geary Point
D 2/503
Parade Ground
Ramsey Ravine
James
James Ravine
Way
Wheeler
Wheeler Point
Hearn
F 2/503
Grubbs
Smith
Cheney
Cheney Ravine
Rock Point
US positions, dawn February 17
Japanese positions, dawn February 17
US positions, dusk February 20
Japanese positions, dusk February 20
Japanese battery
0
1 mile
0
1km

Corregidor from the old stockade west. The 1st Battalion, 34th Infantry took charge of the area east of that to Malinta Hill. The 503rd PRCT would clear the tadpole's head, while the 1st Battalion, 34th Infantry contained the Japanese in Malinta Tunnel and Tailside, ensuring those troops did not bother the 503rd PRCT's efforts.

P-47 Thunderbolts from the Fifth Air Force kept Rock Force well supplied with air support. Many carried napalm rather than bombs, and all could strafe targets with the aircraft's eight .50-cal. machine guns. (AC)

By the time the day ended, the US had the drill for clearing out Japanese installations perfected. The first step was to call in an airstrike or naval fire support. As soon as this ended, the infantry attacked. If they failed, heavy weapons were brought forward, often including a 75mm pack howitzer, to soften up the target. Infantrymen with rifles or submachine guns would cover the approaches as an assault team was brought in. These included flamethrower teams. To prevent backsplash, the operators often projected fuel unignited, tossing in a white phosphorous grenade to set off the fuel. If after all that Japanese troops were still alive and refusing to surrender, a demolition team came in and blocked the entrance, entombing the resisting soldiers.

There was generous support from both the US Navy and USAAF. The Navy left two and sometimes three destroyers continuously on call off Corregidor. Similarly, the USAAF kept four to eight aircraft, typically P-47 fighter-bombers, over Corregidor throughout the daylight hours. Carrying two 500lb bombs, or two 200-gallon tanks of napalm, they would circle until called on for an airstrike. (If they ran low on fuel without being used, a ground controller typically gave them a target to bomb so they did not go home with unexpended ordnance.)

This support was carefully coordinated. For airstrikes a USAAF forward observer contacted the aircraft leader, and designated the target, using air support photos. The leader would be given the position of the nearest friendly troops, and a line of flight where overs and shorts were harmless to them. US lines were marked with colored smoke, while the target was marked by a white phosphorous round. Runs were made by individual aircraft, with adjustments made on each try. Bombs were used on point targets, napalm on area targets. After the battle, Lieutenant-Colonel Postlethwait wrote of the effects of napalm: "A two-hundred-gallon tank of that stuff bursting in the undergrowth of a ravine flushes out the rodents in it most efficiently."

By sunset the 503rd PRCT had cleared batteries Way and Geary (sites of prewar 12in. mortars), pillboxes east and northeast of Battery Cheney, and a pillbox north of the hospital, as well as clearing numerous caves and bunkers within the 503rd PRCT's perimeter. They held most of Morrison Hill and were ready to move into Morrison Ravine the next day. Communications with the 1st Battalion, 34th Infantry had been established. The 1st Battalion was holding the area around the stockade. In the process they had killed over 360 Japanese troops on Topside, nearly 200 of which were killed by 75mm artillery fire. The cost was eight US paratroopers killed.

The 503rd PRCT was well supplied. In addition to the morning drop, a supply drop at 1300hrs delivered 250 gallons of water and two days'

Rooting the Japanese out of their caves often required a coordinated effort. In this photo several US paratroopers are providing suppressive fire, allowing a flamethrower or bazooka man to move up and provide a killing stroke. (US Army)

K-rations for a regiment. After 1600hrs they had communications with the beach. They had motor transportation, a captured Japanese truck they had been using since morning, and two jeeps with trailers that had made the trip from Bottomside to Topside, loaded with 5-gallon water cans. They also captured significant quantities of Japanese supplies and rations.

The 1st Battalion, 34th Infantry was similarly well situated, with a firm hold on Malinta Hill. Its troops killed an estimated 50 Japanese men that day, but had over 2,000 penned up in Malinta Tunnel, and 1,000–1,500 more contained in Corregidor's eastern end. Both units settled into night positions, the 503rd PRCT withdrawing from some gains to secure a more defensible perimeter.

The night of February 17/18 passed quietly. There were no Japanese counterattacks. Instead, the Japanese infiltrated back to positions they lost the previous day. The paratroopers soon discovered this when they began the systematic reduction of enemy installations the next morning. Most of this infiltration was due to the Japanese using interconnecting tunnels, which they knew of due to their familiarity with the island. Company OPs also spotted small parties of Japanese troops using crevices and ravines to hide their movements. The paratroopers applied the tactics used the previous day to root out these infiltrators. They worked even more effectively than they had on the 17th. Artillery fire killed 70 Japanese men, aggressive patrolling another 719. The paratroopers took 19 casualties.

At Malinta Hill, more Japanese activity was seen than on the previous day. The Japanese opened a southwest exit to Malinta Tunnel and attempted to operate a 75mm cannon from it. They were observed setting up the gun, and were fired on and eliminated. Japanese forces on Tailside intermittently fired machine guns at US defensive positions atop Malinta Hill. Lieutenant-Colonel Postlethwait concluded the Japanese were consolidating for an attack.

Logistics and evacuation also took place on February 18. Dead and wounded were brought down from Topside by ambulance to Bottomside using the jeeps and trailers sent up the previous day. On the return trip to Topside, the jeeps brought up water, radios, rations, and flamethrowers. A portable surgical unit was sent up from the beach and set up in a previously empty building on Topside. Ammunition and other supplies arrived by airdrop, were collected by details, and brought to the regimental supply dump. Things seemed to be going well for Rock Force as the sun set.

The next day proved a long one. It started at 0200hrs, when 40 Japanese troops near Breakwater Point blew up an ammunition dump and 400 Japanese soldiers in Cheney Ravine and at Battery Wheeler made a massive counterattack. The explosion killed 15–20 men from I Company, 3rd Battalion, 503rd PRCT who were in a building directly above the subterranean ammunition dump.

Fire was a particularly effective weapon against a dug-in enemy. Here, two US paratroopers provide overwatch as they wait for napalm to finish burning out a Japanese position. (US Army)

The counterattack was led by IJN Lieutenant Endo, probably the senior surviving officer on Topside by that point. It was a massed infantry attack, the type Pacific theater GIs described as a "banzai" assault. Its object was less to defeat the enemy, but rather to allow the soldiers conducting it an opportunity to die gloriously for the Emperor while inflicting maximum punishment on the enemy. It was an indication of Japanese desperation, and the effectiveness of the US offensive to date.

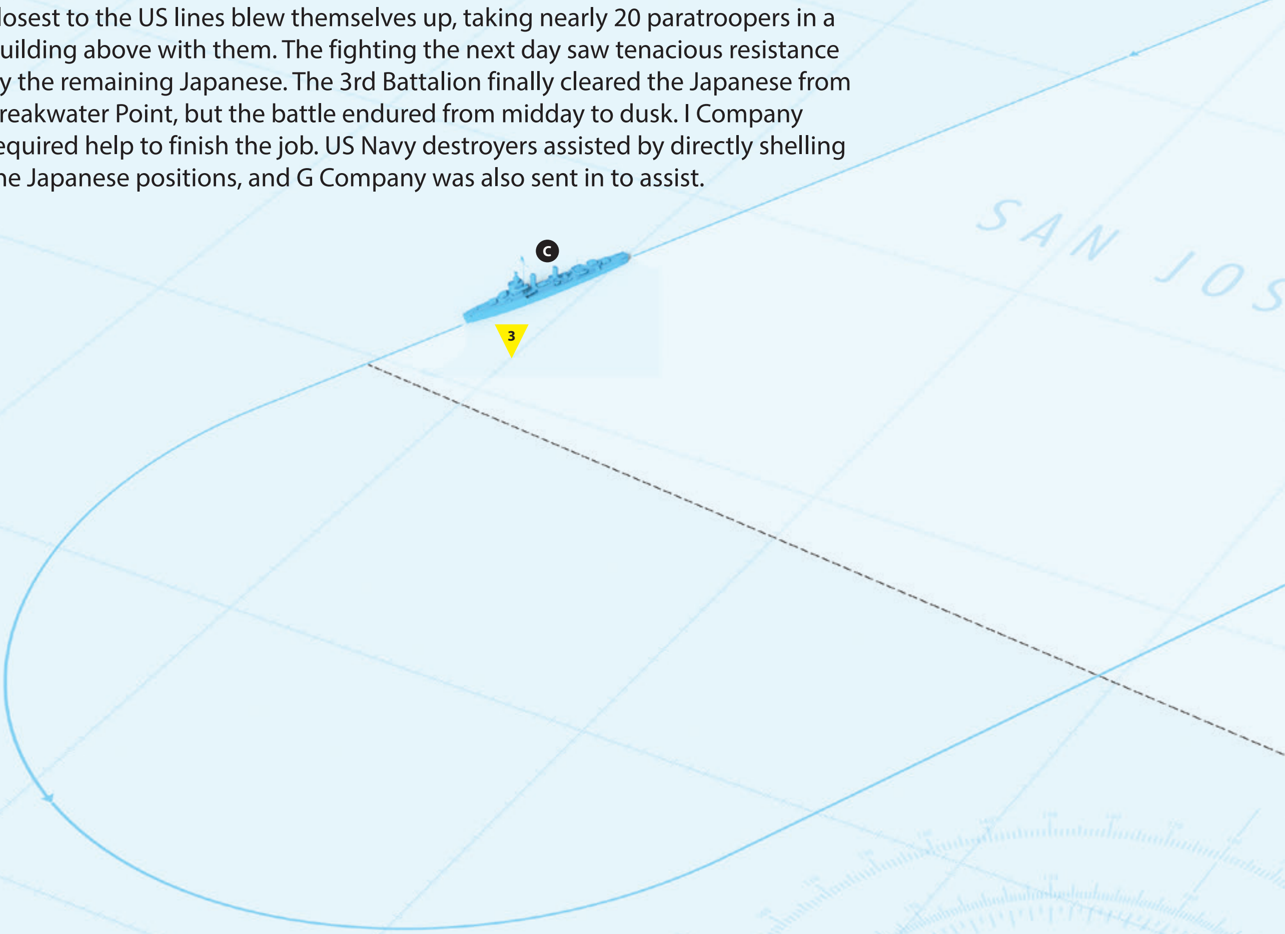
It was also highly successful. It reached its climax at 0600hrs, just before morning twilight. The attack from Cheney Ravine hit the seam between the front defended by F Company, 2nd Battalion and D Company, 2nd Battalion. The attackers broke through the front lines and pushed deep into 503rd PRCT-held territory. Some elements pushed as far in as 2nd Battalion Headquarters near the Topside Barracks before being stopped. The paratroopers' counterattack prevented the Japanese from exploiting their gains. The Japanese troops were back to their original lines by 0800hrs with heavy casualties. The 503rd PRCT hunted down the scattered Japanese soldiers in hiding behind US lines by 1100hrs.

That marked the tone of the day. There was heavy fighting throughout Topside all through February 19. Despite the suicide at the ammunition dump, there were plenty more Japanese at Breakwater Point, and I Company required reinforcement from G Company and naval gunfire support to make progress. They killed 70 more Japanese soldiers that day. They also captured a prisoner, one of three taken that day. They were among the first captured since the battle began.

The Japanese around Morrison Hill also blew up two separate ammunition dumps, taking their occupants with them. It was an additional sign of Japanese desperation. H Company moved against Battery James in the afternoon, aided by P-47s dropping 2,000 gallons of napalm. E Company made progress against batteries Grubbs and James. By dusk the Japanese had lost another 500 killed, while Rock Force lost 50 killed and 75 wounded.

BREAKWATER POINT, FEBRUARY 19, 1945

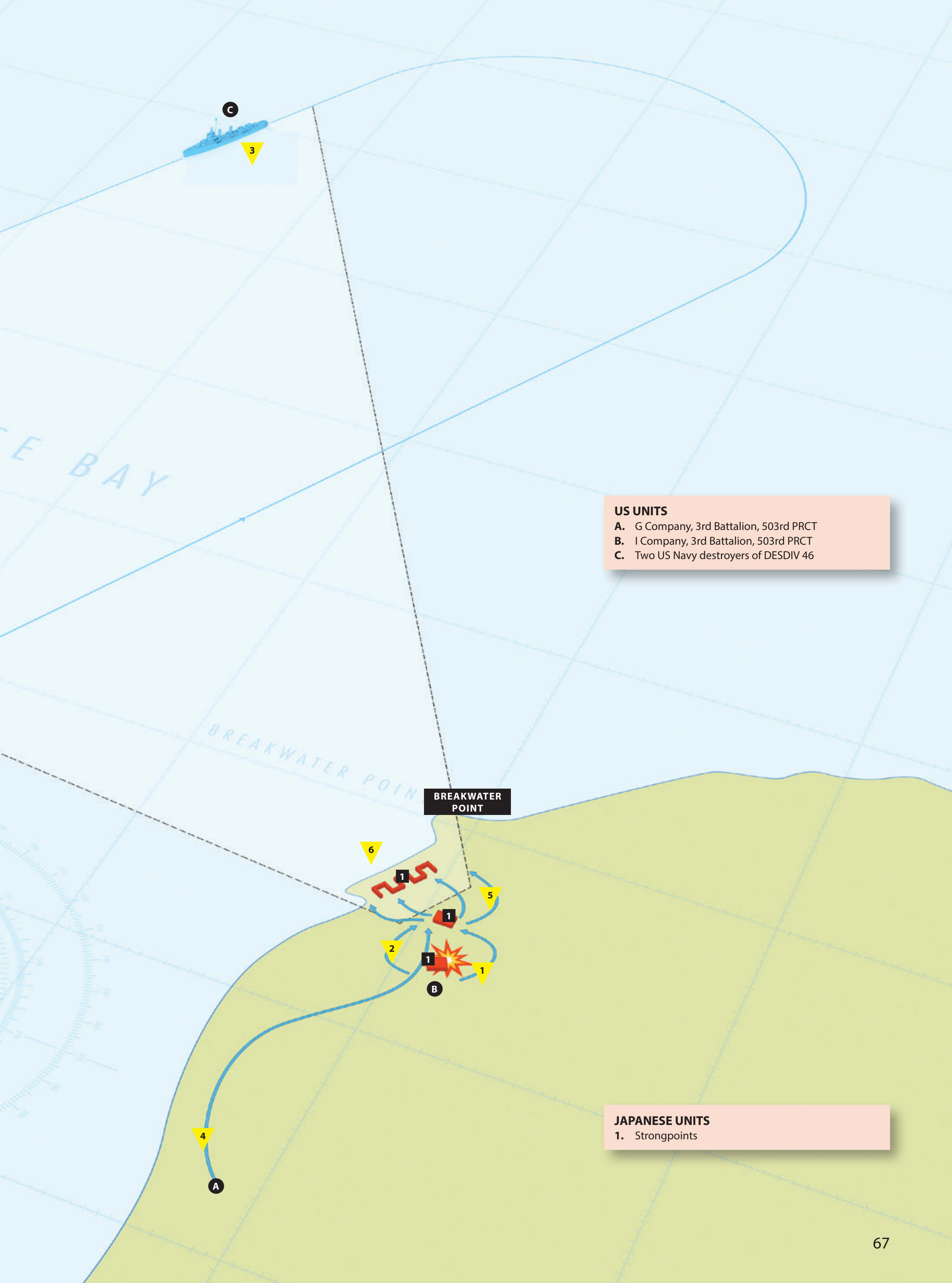
The Japanese defenders were located in a series of tunnels, caves, and bunkers in the hills immediately around Breakwater Point. The 503rd PRCT picked February 19, three days after the initial American landing, as the day to dig them out. Paratroopers from I Company, 3rd Battalion, 503rd PRCT were given that task, deploying after sunset on February 18 for a dawn attack the next day. The battle started early when, around 0200hrs, the Japanese in the tunnel closest to the US lines blew themselves up, taking nearly 20 paratroopers in a building above with them. The fighting the next day saw tenacious resistance by the remaining Japanese. The 3rd Battalion finally cleared the Japanese from Breakwater Point, but the battle endured from midday to dusk. I Company required help to finish the job. US Navy destroyers assisted by directly shelling the Japanese positions, and G Company was also sent in to assist.



EVENTS

(All take place on February 19.)

1. 0200hrs: The Japanese defenders blow up an underground ammunition dump on Ramsey Ravine.
2. 0900hrs (approximately): I Company, 3rd Battalion, 503rd PRCT launches an attack on Breakwater Point.
3. 0930–1730hrs: Using artillery spotting from shore, US Navy destroyers seal the tunnels and caves using naval gunfire, frequently firing guns individually.
4. 1100hrs: G Company, 3rd Battalion, 503rd PRCT is sent to reinforce I Company due to slow progress caused by Japanese resistance.
5. 1300hrs: Reinforced, 3rd Battalion paratroopers continue pushing the Japanese out of their positions, killing or sealing in any who refuse to surrender.
6. 1730hrs: Organized Japanese resistance on Breakwater Point ends. The remaining Japanese are confined to isolated caves along its edge, which are sealed on February 20.


C
3
E BAY
BREAKWATER POINT
BREAKWATER POINT
6
1
1
5
2
1
1
B
4
A

US UNITS

A. G Company, 3rd Battalion, 503rd PRCT
B. I Company, 3rd Battalion, 503rd PRCT
C. Two US Navy destroyers of DESDIV 46

JAPANESE UNITS

1. Strongpoints

US paratroopers use a mortar to clear out Japanese troops hiding in a cave on Topside. While the term "mopping up" implies minor combat, this type of small-scale action could be intense. (US Army)

The events of February 19 marked a turning point on Topside. The predawn attack would be the last offensive action conducted by the Japanese on Topside. That did not mean the fight for Topside was over; there was still much more to do. The paratroopers needed to dig out the remaining Japanese scattered in tunnels and caves throughout Topside. There were significant pockets of Japanese remaining in the cliffs and ravines around the periphery of Topside, entrenched in fortifications originally built to repel invaders approaching from the sea or designed to protect the coastal artillery that gave Corregidor its significance.

Even though the strongest defenses pointed outwards and the paratroopers were taking them from the rear, they were still formidable defensive positions. This required a systematic and methodical clearance. One bug that turned into a feature was the Japanese tendency to reoccupy positions that had been cleared out the day before. They would infiltrate at night, when US forces withdrew to night positions.

By February 20, the 503rd PRCT's men were learning to keep positions difficult to retake occupied at night in order to prevent this. Other positions looked defensible to the Japanese reoccupying them, but were death traps, easy for the US to clean up with little risk to US soldiers. These were left empty for the Japanese, baited traps that simplified the task of clearing Topside of its original tenants.

There was also significant offensive action by the 503rd PRCT. Breakwater Point, Wheeler Point, Rock Point, and Battery James were scenes of particularly hard fighting. Assisted by naval artillery, I Company sealed 53 caves around Breakwater Point on February 20, and cleared out Ramsey Ravine. C Company took Battery Wheeler, and cleared out much of Wheeler Point. G Company swept the area between Morrison Hill and the coast, closing 17 caves. Destroyers and P-47s helped the 503rd PRCT clear out the area between Rock Point and James Ravine. By nightfall most of the fighting on Topside was over. While there were still holdouts (a last, small banzai attack would be launched from Wheeler Point on February 23), it was time to turn attention to the eastern half of Corregidor.

MOP-UP ON CORREGIDOR: FEBRUARY 21–28, 1945

As things were brought under control on Topside, preparations began to clear Corregidor's eastern half of Japanese troops. An offensive involving a two-battalion push was planned, with a start date of February 24. Preparations included a general police-up of Topside. The 503rd PRCT organized salvage parties to collect equipment lost on the first day's jump. Forty percent of the pack howitzers, 30 percent of the light and heavy machine guns, half the mortars and flamethrowers, and one-quarter of the radios dropped went astray on the first day. Salvage parties collected the weapons and equipment of the dead and wounded which had been left on the battlefield. The salvaged items were placed in normal storage and issued as needed. Demolition equipment and medical supplies were sent from Mariveles.

The 503rd PRCT continued its systematic clearance of Topside, but there was less enemy activity and contact there on account of fewer Japanese troops. Fighting continued in James and Ramsey ravines, and at Rock Point, Battery Cheney, and Wheeler Point. It often involved paratroopers retaking positions they captured the previous day. By this time, some positions were being abandoned deliberately to bait a man trap. They were also moving into hitherto ignored areas, like Geary Point and Searchlight Point.

The US Navy and USAAF focused on Corregidor's tail during February 21, conducting a preparatory bombardment of Tailside. Two USN destroyers shelled suspected enemy positions, as fighter-bombers (mostly P-47s) worked over areas east of Malinta Hill. B-24s conducted saturation bombing on locations of known tunnels on Tailside and on Kindley Field.

While the 503rd PRCT had been reducing Topside, the 34th Infantry was holding Malinta Hill. The Japanese kept launching small probing attacks against the 34th Infantry's positions at night. They were conducted by small parties from Tailside attempting to infiltrate into Malinta Hill and by small parties leaking out of Malinta Tunnel through undiscovered minor exits. These nuisance (but still dangerous) attacks could not be coordinated, and attempts to surprise the Americans failed.

The Japanese trapped within Malinta Tunnel realized they could not attack the US troops on the hilltop in large enough numbers through the small exits available to them. The main entrances to Malinta Tunnel had been sealed off by February 18, collapsed by naval gunfire. Reopening the western entrance was hopeless. It had been brought down by 8in. gunfire. The gunfire was overkill, but overkill was viewed as necessary to protect the landing beaches.

The eastern entrance was not as completely collapsed. The Japanese trapped within the tunnels believed they could blow it open, allowing the men within it to launch a mass attack against the Americans atop Malinta Hill, overwhelming them. If that failed, they could join forces with the Japanese troops on Corregidor's tail. They set off demolition charges at 2130hrs on February 21.

Battery Cheney at the end of the campaign. (US Army)

Whoever set the demolition charges had more enthusiasm than knowledge. Malita Tunnel was generously stocked with ammunitions and explosives. Unsure of the amount of explosive needed to clear the entrance, those setting the explosives ended up using too much. The resulting blast rocked Malinta Hill. Debris, including large rocks, sprayed out of the entrance like a giant shotgun blast. It created a landslide that buried six US soldiers of A Company, 1st Battalion, 34th Infantry. It also set off secondary explosions within Malinta Tunnel. Remarkably, several hundred Japanese in a side tunnel, sheltered from the blast, were able to exit Malinta Tunnel from the East Exit and various smaller outlets, and some attacked the US troops atop the hill. They were repulsed, but about 300 successfully escaped to the east, reinforcing the Japanese on Tailside.

The rest of the Japanese personnel in Malinta Tunnel—those not killed by the breeching explosion—remained trapped. They could not escape. On February 23 and 24, intermittent explosions shook Malinta Hill as the remaining Japanese within Malinta Tunnel committed suicide by setting off additional ammunition within the tunnel complex.

During February 22 and 23, the 503rd PRCT's 1st Battalion and 3rd Battalion came off Topside to position for a sweep east of Malinta Hill. The 462nd Parachute Field Artillery Battalion had 11 of its 18 75mm howitzers and 19 of its 24 .50-cal. machine guns serviceable by February 22. They accompanied the infantry, assembling on the Parade Ground on February 22.

US forces were also improving the portion of Corregidor they controlled. Bulldozers were sent the first day. By February 22, they carved out an airstrip on Topside capable of operating light aircraft. At 1000hrs the first L-4 Grasshopper (the military version of the Piper Cub) landed on Corregidor. Bulldozers also improved roads, and cleared away debris and refuse, improving sanitary conditions. The US attended to burying the enemy dead. Equipment that landed outside the perimeter on the first day's drops was located and moved to supply dumps. Weapons abandoned by dead and wounded paratroopers were collected.

Insecticide and sprayers were sent from Luzon. That day's airdrop included mail and two days' rations. The 503rd PRCT's command also asked

The Japanese underestimated the effects of the explosives they used to open the east end of Malinta Tunnel. The resulting blast brought down that side of Malinta Hill, as shown in this picture. (AC)

that 2,700 paratrooper coveralls be airdropped the next day. The fighting had left many paratroopers wearing rags.

The Topside mop-up was by no means a trivial operation. The Japanese were still resisting fiercely, although there were fewer of them. There would be scores of sharp, small-unit fights on February 22 and 23. These were on the periphery of Topside and Middleside, in the regions of the shoreline cliffs, and involved the systematic clearing of the subterranean fortifications in which the Japanese were concealed. Enemy morale was still high. They were well supplied and well fed, so they could not be starved out. They had to be dug out.

The fighting took a toll on the remaining Japanese. On February 22, 119 Japanese killed-in-action were counted. Only one prisoner was taken. The Japanese launched another mass attack on Topside at 0430hrs on February 23. Starting from positions around Wheeler Point, 400 Japanese struck the 503rd PRCT's perimeter in a last attempt to regain the high ground on Topside. It failed.

The surviving Japanese withdrew to their starting point. The 2nd Battalion, 503rd PRCT continued its systematic clearing of the caves and bunkers around the periphery of Topside. Clearing activities would continue until March 2. The Japanese troops on Topside were unable to launch any further offensive actions. Those holding out on Topside could only maintain their positions until the 503rd PRCT turned its attention to dealing with them, at which point they were faced with surrender or death.

Almost all the remaining Japanese on Topside chose the latter. Only six Japanese prisoners were taken during the first week's fighting. The US killed just under 2,500 Japanese troops during that period. Several hundred others opted for death by suicide in the depths of the caves and tunnels they were in. US casualties to that point totaled 118 killed in action and 314 wounded.

Meanwhile, the rest of the 503rd PRCT used February 23 to prepare for its assault on the eastern half of Corregidor, scheduled to start the next day. Troops of the 1st and 3rd battalions and the 462nd Parachute Field Artillery Battalion moved to marshaling areas on Middleside and Bottomside. Hand grenades and bazooka rounds were shipped to Corregidor from

By February 22, the fighting on Topside had quieted down considerably. Men of the 503rd PRCT spent part of the day policing the battlefield, collecting equipment and weapons left there during the previous days' combat. (US Army)

Mariveles, and issued to the paratroopers. Equipment was checked, and if necessary replaced.

While the troops prepared for the next day's offensive, regimental and battalion commanders along with members of the regimental and battalion staffs moved to Malinta Hill. There they familiarized themselves with the terrain on which they would be fighting the next day. Battle plans were adjusted, based on their observations.

The attack opened at 0730hrs, shortly after sunrise. In the hour before that, the US Navy and USAAF conducted a heavy bombardment of the area between Malinta Hill and the western end of Kindley Field. The regiment's artillery had moved onto firing positions on Malinta Hill before the attack began. They opened the attack with an intense barrage—or as intense as 11 75mm howitzers could provide.

Initially, the 1st Battalion, 503rd PRCT led the attack, passing through the positions held by the 34th Infantry, reinforced by two M4 Sherman tanks, still on loan. Once they began advancing, they encountered heavy mortar and machine-gun fire. US counterfire allowed the 1st Battalion to push forward. The 3rd Battalion followed behind the 1st, clearing bypassed enemy positions. They were soon pushing east.

They encountered serious resistance at Engineer Point, on the north side of the tail, just east of Malinta Hill. Offshore bombardment, combined with vigorous action by 1st Battalion paratroopers, stifled the Japanese opposition. The 1st Battalion bypassed Engineer Point, and 3rd Battalion cleaned it out.

The delay allowed Japanese troops east of Engineer Point to prepare a counterattack. While 1st Battalion was moving toward Infantry Point, 800 yards east of Engineer Point, the Japanese massed 600 men 300 yards east of Engineer Point. They occupied positions on either side of a road running through Tailside. A mix of naval marines and combat engineers, these were combat troops trained to fight as infantry. They posed a real threat to the lead elements of 1st Battalion.

The 462nd Parachute Field Artillery Battalion came into its own. The Japanese troops were too close to US lines for airstrikes or naval gunfire support. The crew of the 462nd's pack howitzers had been working with the parachute infantry for over a week. They had no problem distinguishing friend from foe at close quarters. As the Japanese prepared a charge against the 1st Battalion, the 462nd unleashed a barrage. Catching the enemy in the open at the start of the charge, the 75mm shells blew the attack apart. Artillery fire killed some 300 Japanese soldiers. Parachute infantrymen easily turned back the survivors, killing still more. The rest fell back in confusion.

At Engineer Point one tunnel complex captured by US troops yielded 19 Shinyo suicide boats. They were almost certainly unserviceable. The US Navy destroyers providing Corregidor with gunfire support would have been perfect targets for Shinyos.

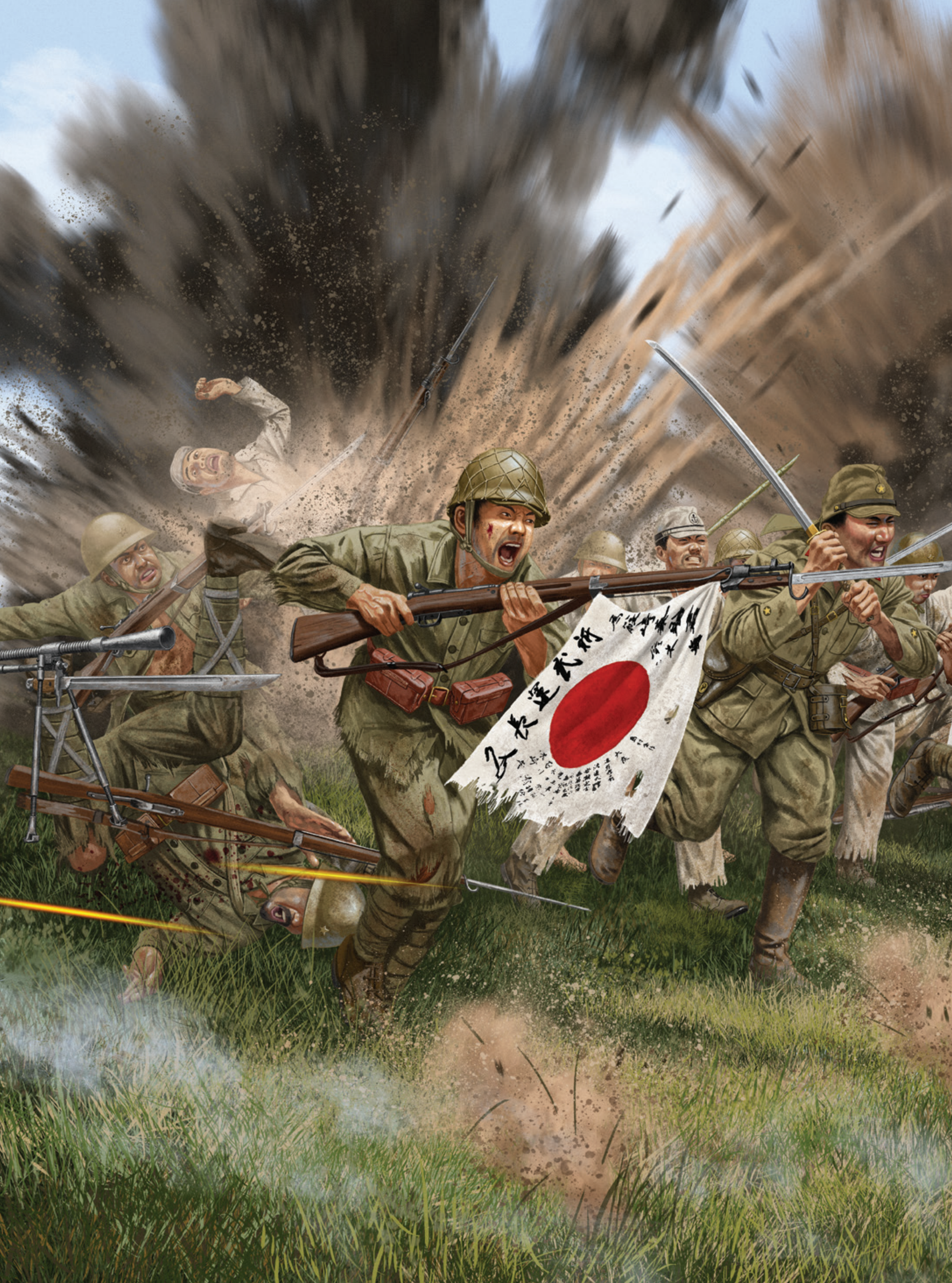
A howitzer and its crew from the 462nd Parachute Field Artillery Battalion. The battalion had jumped on February 16 with the 503rd PRCT. It served valiantly throughout the campaign, but never as effectively as it did on February 23, breaking up a Japanese charge. (US Army)

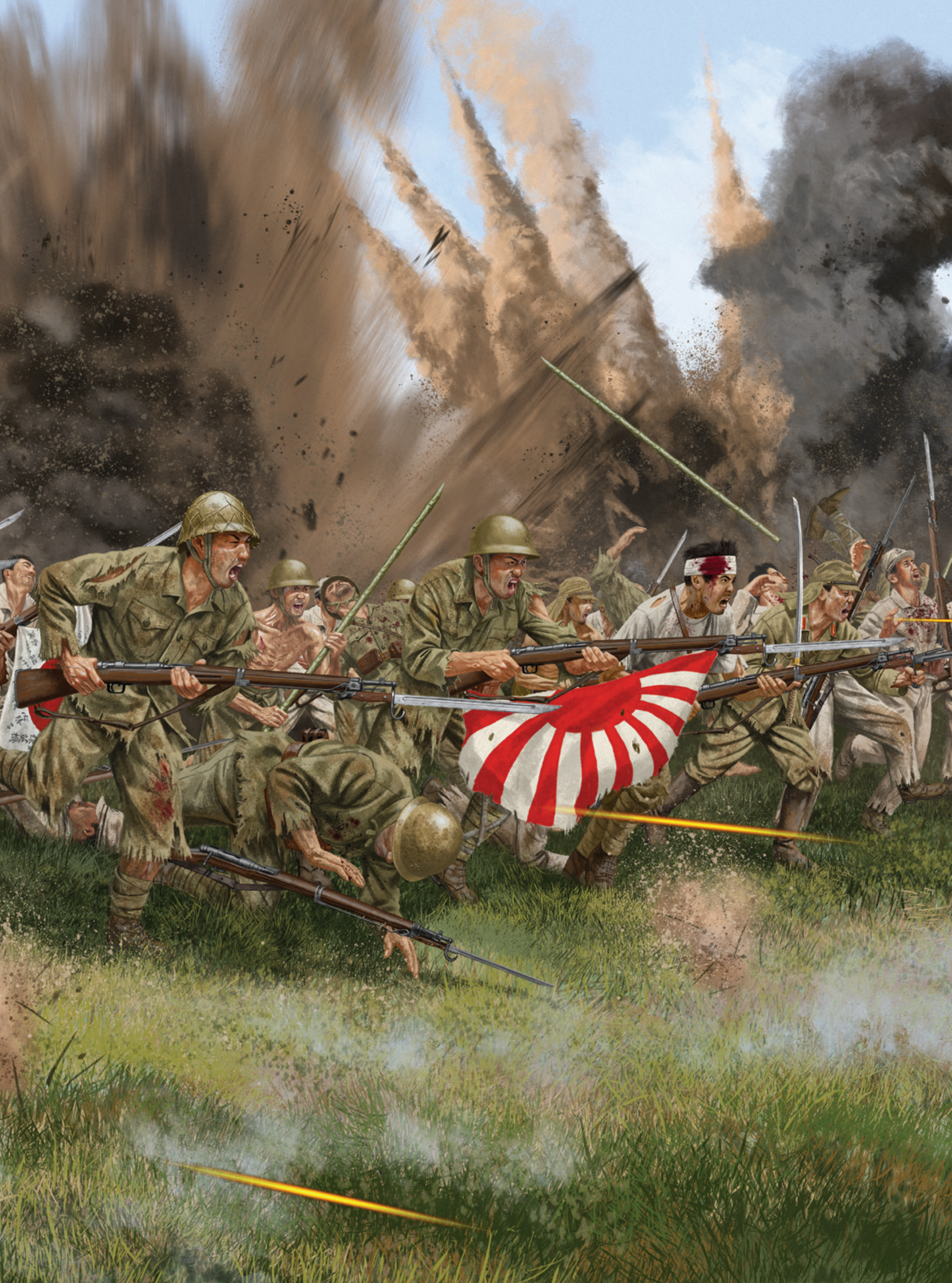
The 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment was relieved in place by the 2nd Battalion, 151st Infantry Regiment. The 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry assembled near South Dock for transportation to Mariveles, and reunification with the rest of their regiment. The 151st was part of the 38th Infantry Division, a National Guard Division made up of units drawn from Midwestern states. The 151st played a minor role in the capture of Corregidor, largely serving as garrison troops, but would take part in subsequent operations on the other Manila Bay islands.

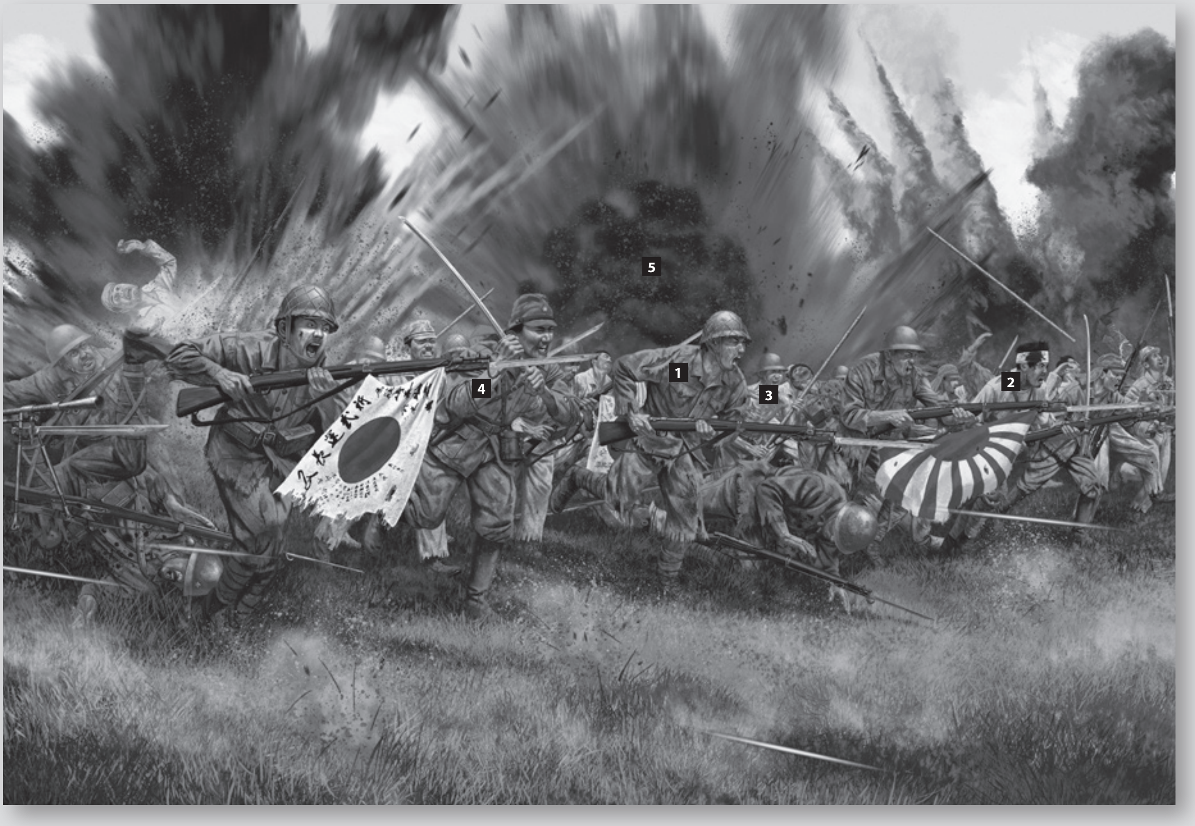
February 24 ended with the 503rd PRCT reaching its intended objective, a line cutting north–south across Corregidor just east of Soldier Point and Camp Point. The 503rd's 1st and 3rd battalions cleared Japanese troops out of the ground between Malinta Hill and the objective line. Over 700 Japanese died that day resisting the regiment's advance. US casualties were light, but one of those killed was Major Robert "Pug" Woods, 1st Battalion's commander.

On Topside, 2nd Battalion, 503rd PRCT continued clearing the area around Wheeler Point, meeting stiff resistance. On Bottomside and Malinta Hill, the 2nd Battalion, 151st Infantry settled into the positions it had taken over from the 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry.

The 503rd PRCT continued its eastward progress on February 25. It advanced east another half-mile, conducting a methodical sweep as it moved forward. There were fewer tunnel and cave complexes on this stretch of Corregidor. It pushed the Japanese out of the fortifications at Ordnance Point and the location of the prewar Battery Denver. By nightfall, it had recaptured most of Kindley Field, and was occupying North Point. Japanese


祈武運長久





THE LAST LARGE JAPANESE COUNTERATTACK, FEBRUARY 24, 1945 (PP. 74–75)

On February 24, the 1st and 3rd battalions of the 503rd PRCT launched an offensive to clear Japanese troops from Tailside. The attack started at 0730hrs and began sweeping east from Malinta Hill. Initial progress was good, but stalled at Engineer Point, a prewar tunnel complex. The Japanese resistance was soon overcome, but the time spent there allowed the remaining Japanese troops on Tailside to mount a counterattack.

The Japanese put together a force of 600 men (**1**). Many were combat engineers or naval infantry (**2**) stationed on Tailside to repel the expected landings and heretofore bypassed by the fighting elsewhere on the island. Others were sailors who had escaped from the Malinta Hill tunnels or civilian construction workers (**3**). While ill trained in infantry tactics, they were willing to die for their emperor. Six hundred men lined up on either side of the road running through Tailside and charged the paratroopers. This number also included officers (**4**).

The US and Japanese lines were too close to allow US airstrikes or naval bombardment. There was too much risk of fratricide. However, the 462nd Parachute Field Artillery Battalion was on Malinta Hill with 11 75mm howitzers. The battalion was used to working in close proximity to the rest of its regiment. It unleashed a barrage (**5**) on the charging Japanese that killed half of the force before the charge built momentum. The paratroopers easily dealt with the survivors, forcing them back.

Paratroopers clearing out Japanese troops on Topside. The 2nd Battalion, 503rd PRCT continued this process even as paratroopers from the1st and 3rd battalions worked to clear out Tailside. (US Army)

resistance at Monkey Point proved stiffer than expected. Major John N. Davis, who replaced "Pug" Woods as 1st Battalion's commander, decided to leave it for the next morning. The battalion bivouacked west of Monkey Point that night.

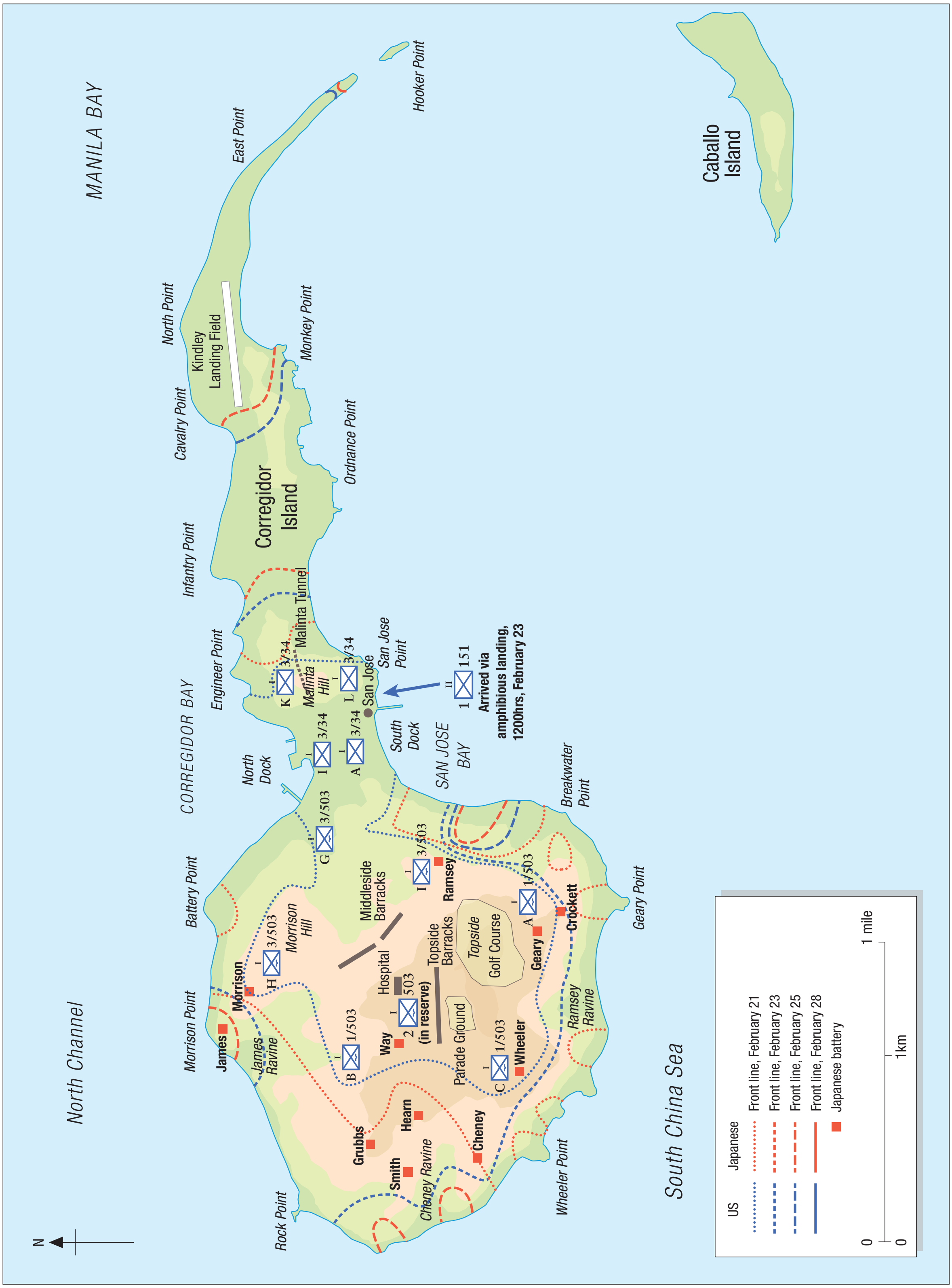
Between one and two hundred Japanese members of Corregidor's garrison abandoned the island that night. They attempted to swim across North Channel to reach Bataan or South Channel to get to Caballo, or made the passage in makeshift rafts. Many carried arms with them. The waters around Corregidor were filled with sharks and reaching Bataan required a swim of 6 miles. It was doable if luck was with you. Some 20 Americans captured at Corregidor in 1942 successfully swam across North Channel to reach Bataan in May and June 1942.

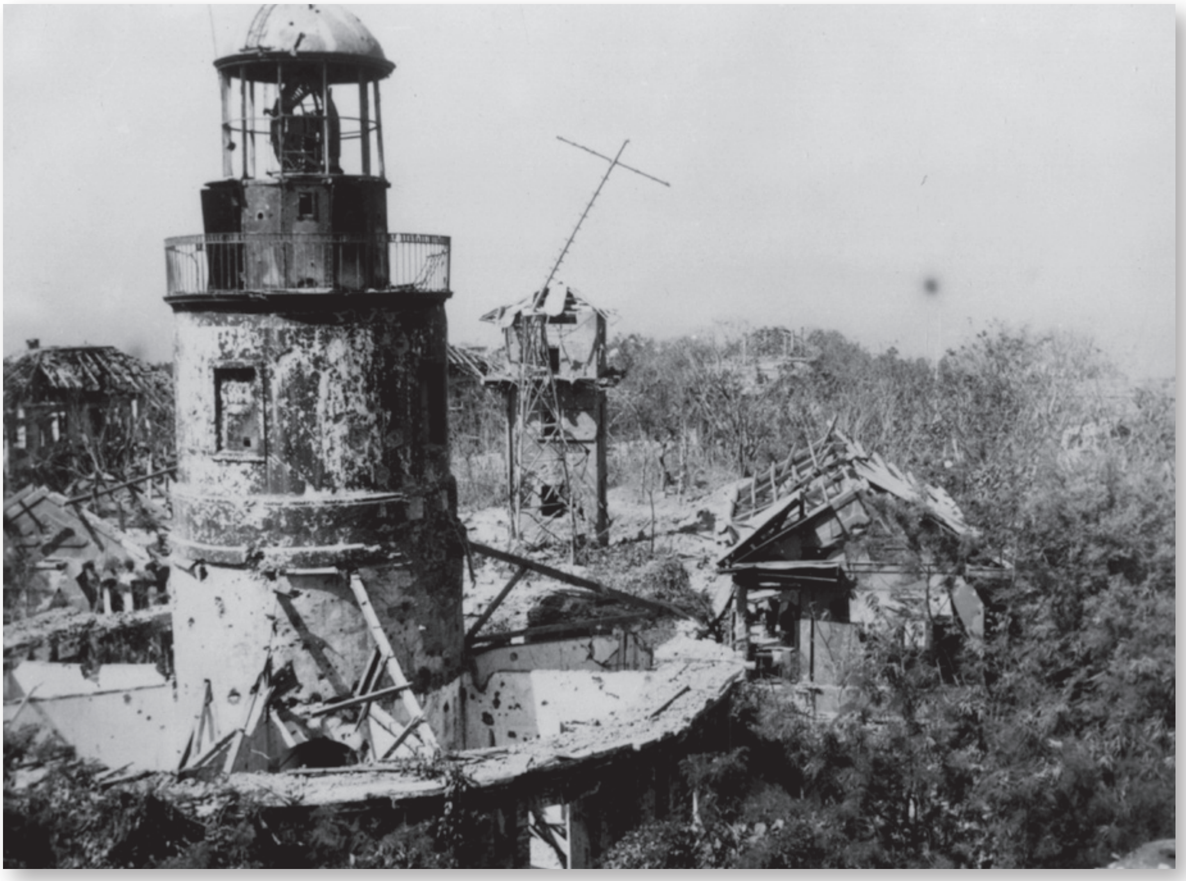
Japanese soldiers had more to deal with than sharks. Navy warships, from destroyers to PT boats, patrolled the waters around Corregidor, stopping any escapees they found. Those who refused to surrender—almost all—were killed. The US soldiers on Corregidor had no desire to allow those who had taken to the sea to live to fight another day. Snipers dealt with those spotted near shore, and artillery attacked those out of rifle range. Aircraft joined in once the sun rose. Few Japanese made it to either shore.

The 503rd PRCT began February 26 intending to retake or seal the US Navy's Radio Intercept Tunnel under Monkey Point, and complete its conquest of Kindley Field. It was expecting lighter resistance than experienced on the previous two days, due to the heavy casualties the Japanese suffered over the previous 48 hours and Japanese attempts to flee island. Instead, for the US, it turned into the bloodiest day of the campaign.

The assault on Monkey Point was an all-US Army affair. American troops were too close to the Japanese positions for air or naval support without risking friendly fire casualties. The 1st Battalion, 503rd PRCT felt it could dig out the Japanese troops without this, using pack howitzers, Sherman tanks, bazookas, demolition charges, and flamethrowers to root the enemy out of their positions atop Monkey Point. Paratroopers of A

The end on Corregidor, February 21–28, 1945


MANILA BAY
CORREGIDOR BAY
North Channel
South China Sea
SAN JOSE BAY
Corregidor Island
Caballo Island
East Point
Hooker Point
North Point
Kindley Landing Field
Monkey Point
Cavalry Point
Ordnance Point
Infantry Point
Malinta Tunnel
Engineer Point
Malinta Hill
San Jose Point
San Jose
South Dock
North Dock
Battery Point
Middleside Barracks
Morrison Hill
Morrison Point
James Ravine
Rock Point
Hospital
Topside Barracks
Topside Golf Course
Parade Ground
Ramsey Ravine
Cheney Ravine
Wheeler Point
Geary Point
Breakwater Point
K 3/34
L 3/34
I 3/34
A 3/34
G 3/503
H 3/503
I 3/503
B 1/503
2 503 (in reserve)
C 1/503
A 1/503
1 151
Arrived via amphibious landing, 1200hrs, February 23
James
Morrison
Grubbs
Way
Hearn
Smith
Cheney
Wheeler
Geary
Crockett
Ramsey
US
Japanese
Front line, February 21
Front line, February 23
Front line, February 25
Front line, February 28
Japanese battery
0
1 mile
1km
N



The Corregidor Lighthouse on Topside. A famous landmark prior to World War II, by the end of the campaign it was a wreck. (US Army)

Company did just that, clearing the Japanese troops from the hilltop and taking possession of it themselves, by about 1030hrs. At 1100hrs, Monkey Point was rocked with a tremendous explosion that blew off the top of the hill.

The Radio Intercept Tunnel, built just before the Pacific War started to house a codebreaking unit, was one of the best-protected spots on Tailside. The Japanese had turned it into an ammunition dump. It contained many tons of ammunition. Realizing defeat was inevitable once the US occupied the terrain over them, the Japanese detonated the stored ammunition.

The explosion flipped a 35-ton Sherman tank into the air like a child's toy. Four of its five-man crew were killed. The survivor was wounded. Major John Davis, who assumed command of 1st Battalion following Woods's death, was tossed into the air. Miraculously, he survived uninjured. Many other 1st Battalion paratroopers were less lucky. Fifty-two were killed. Another 144 were wounded. Medics rushed in. It took them 90 minutes to treat and evacuate the wounded. Around 150 Japanese personnel in the tunnel were killed in the explosion.

The 1st Battalion was so badly battered that Colonel Jones placed it into the regimental reserve. It was sent to an assembly area on Topside on February 27, where it remained for the rest of the campaign. Jones ordered the 3rd Battalion to take over the offensive. They advanced over the dead and wounded to retake the rest of Kindley Field. They occupied all of it, and terrain east of it, by nightfall on February 26.

The Japanese explosion at the old US Navy Radio Intercept Tunnel at Monkey Point killed the 150-odd Japanese personnel in the tunnel and 52 US paratroopers. A further 144 were wounded. The explosion was powerful enough to toss a 35-ton Sherman tank, like the one shown, into the air. (US Army)

The capture of Monkey Point and the explosion of the Radio Intercept Tunnel marked the end of organized resistance on Corregidor. The 3rd Battalion reached the tip of Corregidor's eastern tail well before nightfall on February 27. Enemy resistance was minimal. At the other end of Corregidor, the 2nd Battalion finished clearing Wheeler Point and Searchlight Point. There were isolated pocket of Japanese troops in waterline caves near Wheeler, Engineer, Infantry, and Cavalry points as well as scattered individuals hiding in Corregidor's ravines. Although some survived until the war's end, they posed no more than a nuisance, and were not real threats.

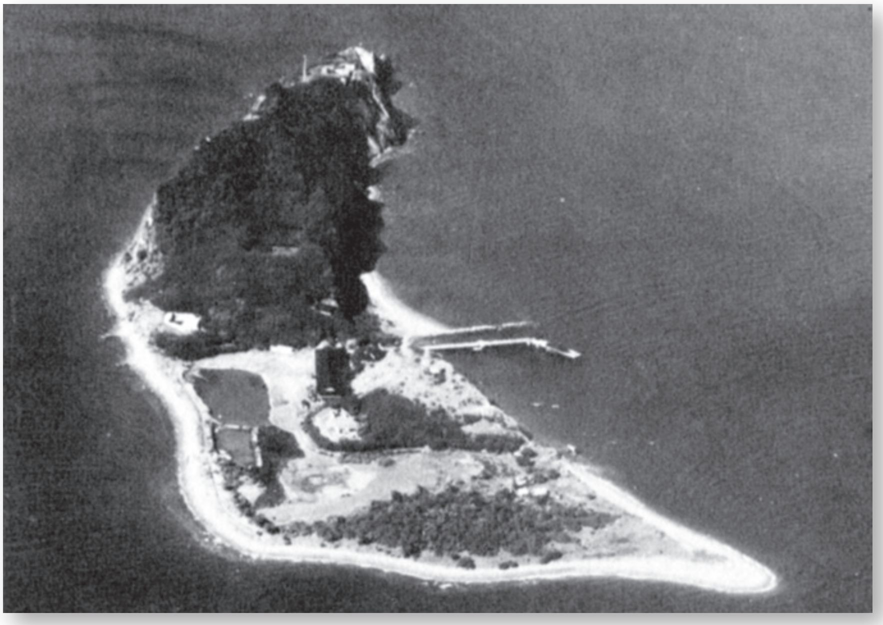
The 503rd PRCT spent two more days hunting down survivors and rooting Japanese soldiers out of their remaining hiding holes. On March 2, Jones declared Corregidor secured. Japanese casualties were high. US forces counted 4,500 bodies. Another 200 died trying to flee the island. The remaining 1,000-odd Japanese personnel believed to have been occupying Corregidor when US forces arrived on February 16 were never accounted for. They had almost certainly been killed, and were either buried in tunnels where they could not be counted, drowned attempting to flee, or had been blown to uncountable fragments.

Only 20 members of the Japanese garrison surrendered. Most were Korean auxiliaries, like Captain Itagaki's orderly. The Nisei translators sent to conduct prisoner interrogations had a lot of spare time. As for US forces, they suffered 1,015 casualties, of whom 455 were killed and 560 wounded. Three-quarters of these came from the 503rd PRCT.

TAKING THE OUTLYING ISLANDS: MARCH 3–APRIL 16, 1945

With the capture of Corregidor, attention turned to the other three islands: Caballo, El Fraile, and Carabao. There was no urgency in retaking them. With Corregidor and Bataan in US hands, the path to Manila was open. US Naval bombardment prior to and during the day of the Corregidor landing had silenced any batteries capable of engaging ships heading to Manila via the route through Manila Bay starting at North Channel. Yet the task would not be complete until the three islands had been cleared of an enemy presence.

Caballo was the first to fall. Located roughly two miles southeast of Corregidor, a mile across east to west, and 500 yards wide, it was the most convenient starting point. On March 18, the commander of the 38th Infantry Division, to which the 151st Infantry belonged, requested



Once Corregidor was taken, the next target was Caballo Island, which lay roughly two miles southeast of Corregidor. This picture was taken prior to World War II. (US Army)

permission to reconnoiter Caballo. A platoon of the 2nd Battalion, 151st Infantry, occupying Corregidor, was sent by LCM to Caballo. Its landing was unopposed, but it soon discovered the enemy in force, dug in on high ground in the center of the island.

Prudently, the platoon withdrew and reported its findings. The Japanese troops were entrenched on three small knolls in the center of Caballo, which rose from 150 to 250ft high. The US codenamed them Hill 1, Hill 2, and Hill 3, from east to west. As a result of the reconnaissance, US intelligence estimated a mixed force made up of 400 IJA and IJN personnel were occupying Caballo Island. This included the artillerymen who manned the 150mm battery placed there. The guns had been knocked out, but some of their crew had survived.

The 151st Infantry returned to Caballo on March 27, this time with its 2nd Battalion reinforced by armor and artillery. The landing was preceded by air and naval bombardment. The USAAF had been using Caballo for practice bombing and increased the number of sorties prior to March 27; and US Navy destroyers worked over any likely targets.

The landing took place at 0900hrs. Prior to that, Fifth Air Force B-25s and P-51s bombed, strafed, and dropped napalm on Caballo. Divisional and regimental artillery from Bataan and Corregidor, including the 151st Infantry's 81mm mortars, joined in the aerial bombardment. Just before landing, US Navy destroyers and rocket-equipped PT boats bombarded the island for 20 minutes. Then the 2nd Battalion landed, carried by LCMs from Corregidor.

The landing went smoothly at first. The Japanese defenders were stunned or in hiding. The 151st Infantry secured Hill 1 within 15 minutes of landing. By the time they began their advance to Hill 2, the Japanese troops had recovered, responding with heavy mortar and machine-gun fire. The hill's rugged terrain and steep slopes further slowed the US assault. It took the rest of the day to capture Hill 2, but by sunset the 151st Infantry had occupied its crest and was securely in possession of it.

On Caballo, the surviving Japanese troops took shelter in the mortar pits of Battery Craighill. Rather than launch a direct assault, which would result in high casualties, the US commander decided to burn the Japanese defenders out. To pump the fuel oil where it was needed, engineers from the 113th Combat Engineering Battalion built this pipeline up the side of Caballo Island. (AC)

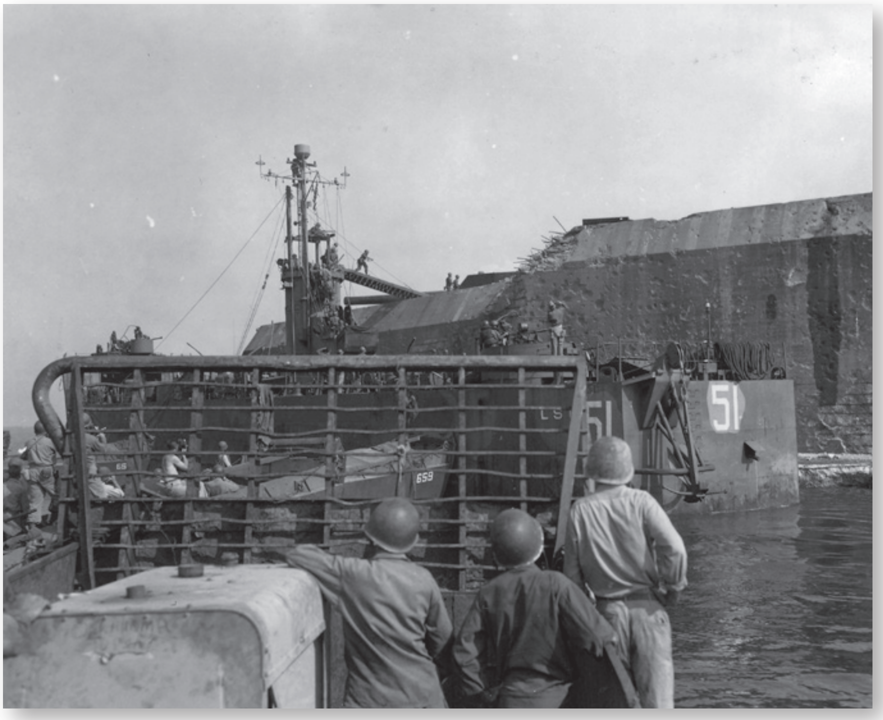
The next day they cleared Hill 3 of Japanese troops, and were in control of most of Caballo. The 151st Infantry had killed half its garrison. Any Japanese survivors withdrew to the mortar pits of Battery Craighill, near the base of Hill 2's eastern slope. There the battle entered a stalemate.

Battery Craighill was a prewar fortification. It had housed four 12in. mortars in sunken pits. The ammunition to feed these weapons came from heavily protected bunkers built of reinforced concrete. The layout was such that direct-fire artillery was ineffective. Tanks and self-propelled guns could not depress their guns far enough to target the entrances to the tunnels. The approaches to the pits were too steep for a tank to travel to the bottom.

The Japanese defenders set up their surviving mortars and machine guns to command the approaches to Battery Craighill. Unless they were silenced, they would stop any US infantry advance—at a high cost to the attackers. The American forces could not silence these guns with indirect artillery. The tunnels were too well protected. Using mortar fire to suppress them did not work, either. The Japanese retreated to their tunnels while the barrage occurred, and re-manned their guns as soon as US fire lifted, before the assaulting US infantry were in position to attack the guns. US commanders did not want to sacrifice troops to take the pits. They were insignificant objectives. But they did want to maintain a force on Caballo to contain the Japanese. On March 31 engineers attempted to burn the Japanese out, pouring fuel oil down a ventilator shaft, and igniting it, but they could not get enough of the fuel oil up the hill and into the shaft.

The commander of the 113th CEB, attached to the 38th Division, suggested pumping the oil up the hill from the beach via a pipeline. The suggestion was adopted. The US Navy donated two fuel cubes with the necessary oil. The USAAF contributed a 110hp pump and flexible hose for the pipeline. The 592nd Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment provided an LCM to carry everything.

On April 5 the engineers pumped over 2,500 gallons of fuel oil into the ventilator shaft, and set it off with a phosphorus grenade. A massive



Taking their inspiration from their success on Caballo Island, fire was used as the main weapon against Fort Drum. Soldiers of the 151st Infantry are shown here boarding the fort from a special drawbridge built on *LSM-51*. After they secured the top, engineers rigged a hose to pump fuel oil into Fort Drum which would be ignited using a satchel charge. (US Army)

flash fire occurred, followed by explosions as Japanese ammunition ignited. They repeated the process on April 6 and 7. Finally, they lowered two demolition charges down the ventilator shaft and laid one at an accessible tunnel entrance, and set off all three simultaneously. Massive flames erupted, followed by more explosions.

A few Japanese survived the fires and explosions. The US troops spent the next few days trying to convince them to surrender, but failed. Finally, on April 13, a patrol entered the tunnels to clear them. They found one surviving Japanese soldier. He refused to surrender and was killed, ending the battle for Caballo.

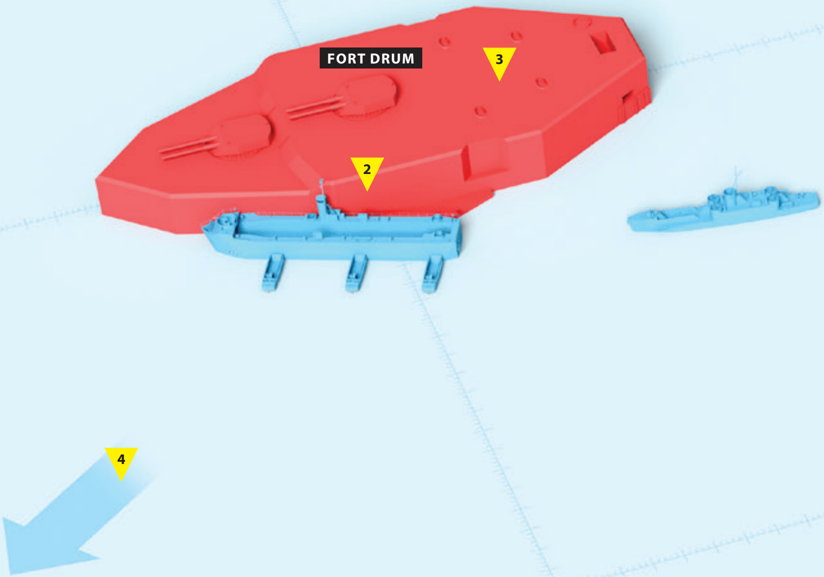
Fort Drum/El Fraile was next. US forces landed on the concrete battleship in late February. A PT boat was patrolling near the fort. Its crew convinced themselves it had been abandoned. They stopped, boarding the fort at the sally port. Seven members of the crew, including its captain decided to explore it. The Japanese held fire as the Americans entered a concrete-lined tunnel. When the party was well within the fort, the Japanese opened up with a machine gun, killing one officer, and wounding another and several enlisted men. The survivors made a hasty retreat, boarded the PT boat, returned to base, and reported their find.

Documents captured on Corregidor indicated Fort Drum had a garrison of 70. As with Battery Craighill on Caballo, no one wanted US soldiers killed for an objective as insignificant as the fort. Yet something had to be done to remove the garrison. The 38th Infantry Division's leaders decided to wait until a solution appeared.

Fire had worked well on Caballo, so it was decided to use fire on Fort Drum. The plan was simple: take control of the top of Fort Drum, pour fuel oil down the ventilation shafts, and set this off with demolition charges. There were challenges in executing the plan. The 20ft-thick concrete deck

FORT DRUM: THE CONCRETE BATTLESHIP

El Fraile had been converted to Fort Drum between 1909 and 1914. The top of the island had been shaved off and replaced by a 20ft concrete deck, 2–3ft thick concrete walls, and two twin 14in. gun turrets. The guns were disabled in 1942. Once the Japanese were discovered occupying the island, plans were laid to remove them. Since Fort Drum was impervious to conventional bombardment, and digging the Japanese out by conventional means would be bloody, an imaginative plan was developed to destroy the fort with incendiaries.



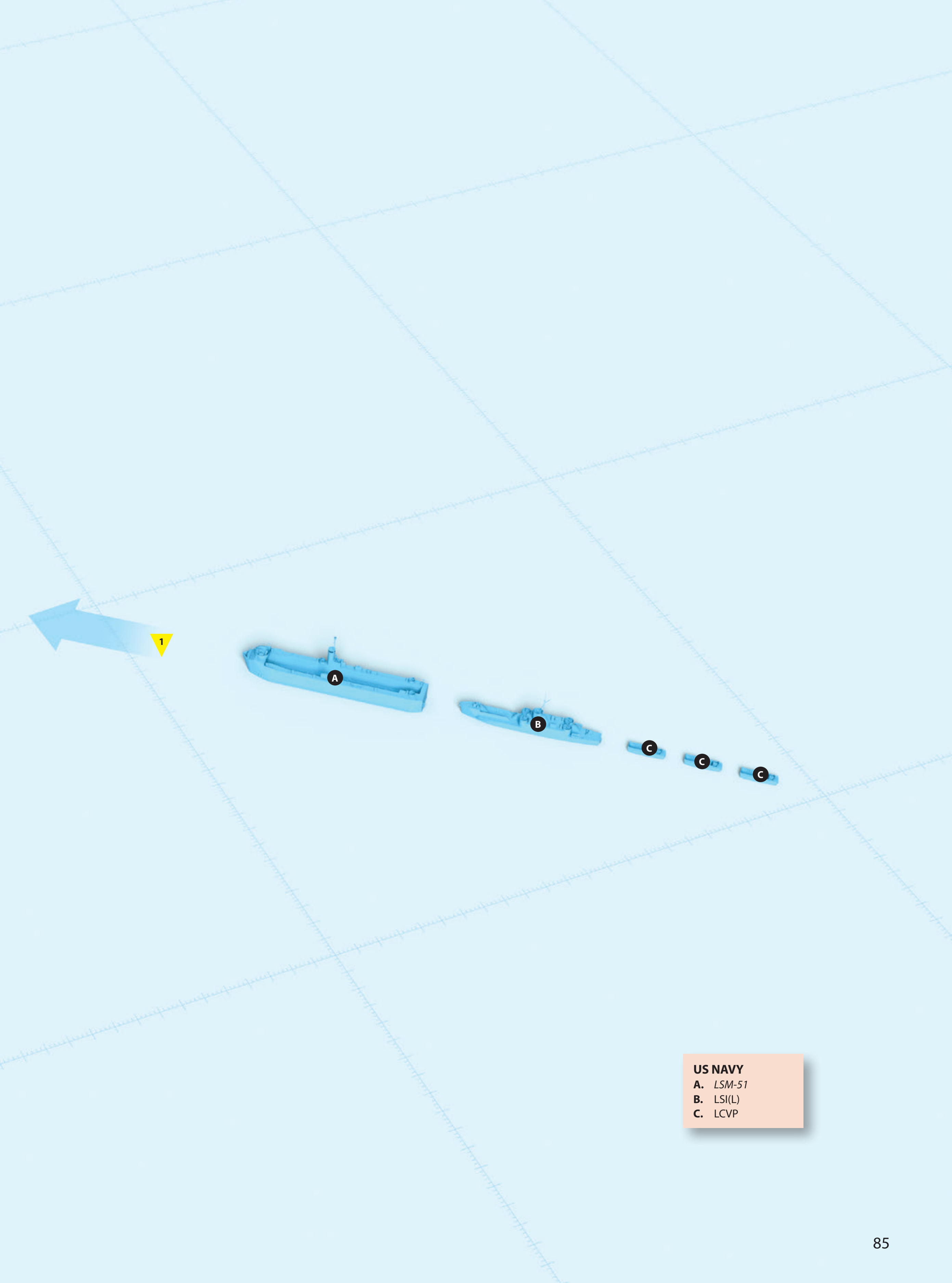
EVENTS

1. *LSM-51,* accompanied by an LCI(L) and several LCVPs, approaches Fort Drum.

2. Using a special bridge on *LSM-51*, troops board Fort Drum's top deck. They secure the deck, and block all but one ventilator shaft. *LSM-51* is maintained in place against the fort's side by the LCVPs.

3. A fuel line is run to the open ventilator shaft, and fuel oil pumped in. The Japanese occupants are down within the fort's engine room, toward its eastern end. US troops then evacuate Fort Drum as a time-fuzed demolition charge is dropped down the ventilator shaft.

4. The US flotilla departs. The fuel oil catches fire when the demolition charge explodes. This, in turn, detonates the 14in. gun ammunition still stored in Fort Drum.



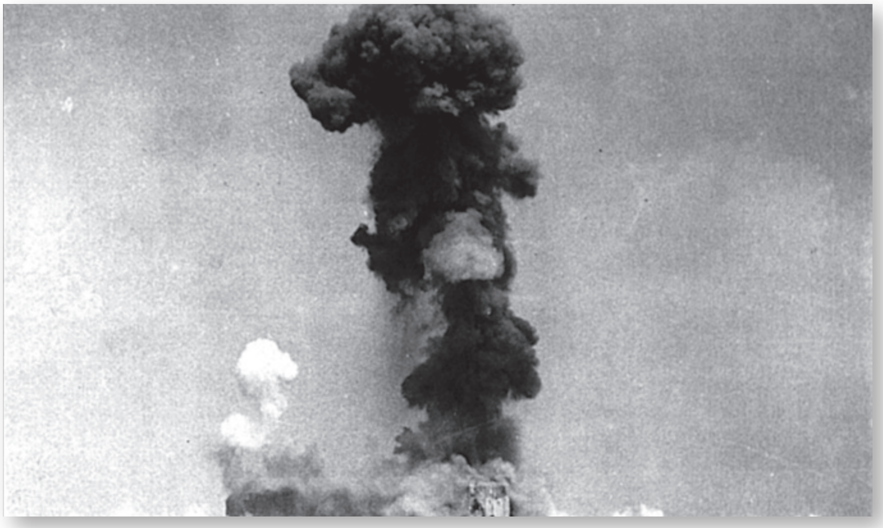
US NAVY

A. *LSM-51*

B. LSI(L)

C. LCVP

The first round of explosions on Fort Drum was unimpressive. Then the fire touched off ammunition for the 14in. guns still stored in Fort Drum's magazines. The result, shown here, was far more remarkable. (US Army)



of Fort Drum was too high to use conventional landing craft, and using the sally port to board the fort was inadvisable.

LSM-51 was modified to add a tower topped with a drawbridge, a 20th-century version of the Roman corvus boarding device. This was the same LSM used at Caballo, with fittings to store and pump oil. On April 18, *LSM-51*, accompanied by an LCI(L), several LCVPs, and F Company of the 2nd Battalion, 151st Infantry approached the concrete battleship. *LSM-51* lay alongside the fort. The drawbridge was lowered and the infantrymen and engineers boarded the fort. Spreading over the fort's top, the engineers sealed all openings except the one ventilator shaft, and the infantry secured the top against a possible Japanese attack.

That did not happen. Except for a few Japanese snipers, firing rifles out of one of the 6in. gun casemates, the Japanese remained passive throughout the US activity. Once the top was secured, a hose was fed over and fuel oil pumped down the ventilator shaft, a demolition charge dropped down it, and a 30-minute fuze lit. After that the US troops reboarded *LSM-51* while pumping continued. The LVCPs were used as tugs to hold *LSM-51* in place. Despite this, high waves broke the fuel oil line. Major Paul LeMasters, commanding 2nd Battalion, reboarded Fort Drum and cut the fuze. The fuel oil line was repaired, pumping concluded (with 3,000 gallons dumped into Fort Drum), and the fuze reset. Then the flotilla of landing craft pulled away to a safe distance to await the results.

The first explosion occurred at 1035hrs, and proved a damp squib. It did start fires, but did not result in the expected demolition of the fort. The attackers withdrew to consult with the admiral in charge. Meanwhile, the fires continued burning and spreading. Eventually, they reached the magazine where the 14in. ammunition was stored prewar. It had never been removed. At 1045hrs, before *LSM-51* reached the flagship, a massive explosion rocked the fort. Concrete chunks and steel plates were tossed into the air, landing 1,000 yards from the fort. Flames shot out of every opening.

Flames and explosions continued the rest of the day and for several days afterwards. Not until April 18 was it safe to approach Fort Drum. That day, a patrol entered the fort, and explored it. The garrison had all been killed. The patrol counted 65 Japanese dead within it.

That left Carabao Island. Half a mile long, and 750 yards across at its widest point, its coast is surrounded by 100ft bluffs. It was the site of Fort Frank, armed prewar with two 14in. guns on disappearing mounts in individual batteries and a mortar pit with eight 12in. mortars. The Japanese had gotten one of the 14in. guns working, and had mounted three working 100mm guns on Carabao in February 1945.

None of these guns were operable in April 1945; they were destroyed by aerial and naval bombardment prior to the Corregidor landing. Yet the batteries and mortar pits remained formidable defensive positions, even without guns. The 38th Infantry Division's planners must have been having thoughts about their experiences on Caballo Island. Carabao seemed to promise a reprise of that battle, especially since captured documents indicated it was garrisoned by 350 Japanese soldiers and sailors.

There was no preliminary reconnaissance by a single platoon at Carabao. The 151st Infantry, tasked with taking the island, assigned its 1st Battalion and C Company of the 113th CEB with its capture. They landed on April 16. The landings were preceded by a massive and prolonged preinvasion bombardment. Fifth Air Force aircraft rocked the island with two days of airstrikes, saturating Carabao with napalm and 1,000lb bombs. For good measure, the US Navy joined in with gunfire support.

The assault was an anticlimax. The US soldiers stormed ashore, meeting no opposition—just as had happened at Caballo. As they pushed cautiously forward, they continued without meeting resistance. The Japanese were gone. They had been withdrawn in early March to reinforce the garrison of Ternate. They were thrown into the defense of this minor port on Manila Bay's south shore, amalgamated with the IJN's 111th Surface Raiding Base Battalion.

The 111th were Japanese marines in the same sense as the US Marine Corps, naval personal trained to fight land battles, rather than sailors armed with infantry weapons and told to fight as infantrymen. It did not matter. The Japanese defenders at Ternate came up short in a battle with the 188th Glider Infantry Regiment of the 11th Airborne Division in early March. Assisted by Filipino guerrillas, the 11th Airborne pushed the Japanese out of Ternate that month.

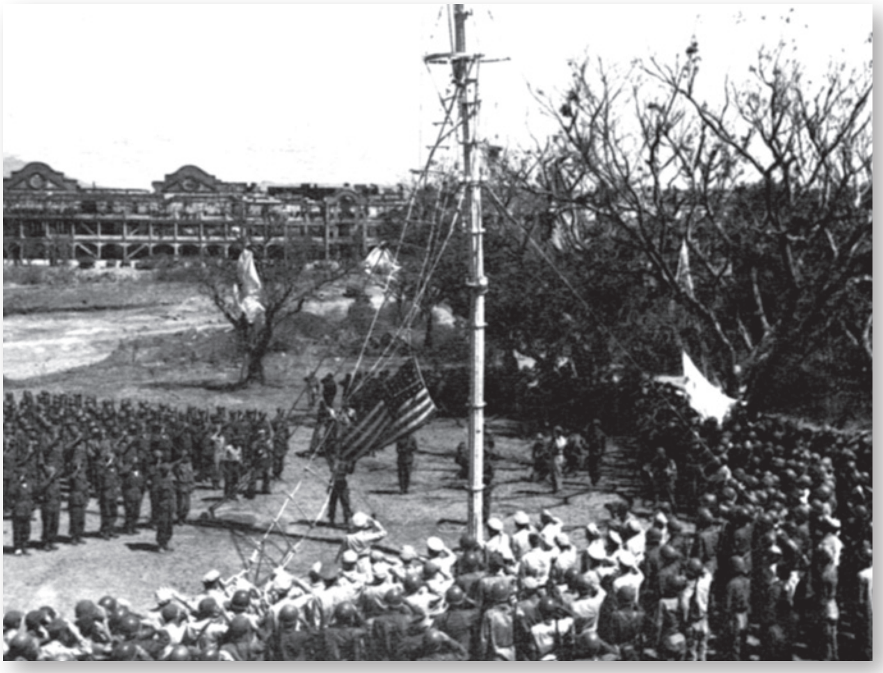
A battalion from the 151st Infantry Regiment was sent to occupy Carabao Island. Although intelligence estimated there were 350 Japanese present, they had been withdrawn prior to the invasion, and these US soldiers found the island occupied by a solitary wild pig. (US Army)

AFTERMATH

On March 2, 1945 General of the Army Douglas MacArthur visited Corregidor. He arrived the same way he had departed the island on March 11, 1942: aboard a PT boat. Several members of his staff who accompanied him that day had been with MacArthur when he departed Corregidor, almost exactly three years earlier. Now he was there for an official flag-raising ceremony to mark the successful capture of the island.

The PT boat tied up at Bottomside. MacArthur inspected the ruined south entrance of Malinta Tunnel before he and his entourage were driven away for a quick tour of Topside. He stopped at Battery Wheeler and the Administration building, which housed his office. There was a gaping hole where his desk had been. Then he drove to the Topside Parade Ground.

The ceremony was held on the same parade ground that had served as a drop zone two weeks earlier. It would not be the first time the flag had been run up a flagpole on Topside. On the day of the landing two paratroopers shinnied up a pole under sniper fire to set a 48-star flag at its peak. They wanted the world to know the US was repossessing the Rock, evicting its



The flag-raising ceremony held at the Parade Ground when General Douglas MacArthur visited Corregidor on March 2, 1945. The Parade Ground has been cleaned up, but evidence of the battle abounds. The ruins of Mile-Long Barracks can be seen in the background. (US Army) current tenants. The March 2 ceremony marked the completion of this task.

The US units that participated in the Corregidor campaign swiftly went on to other assignments. This shows soldiers of the US 3rd Infantry Regiment marching along a road on Mindoro later in 1945. (US Army)

The dead (of both sides) and US injured had been removed, and the debris and rubble present during the battle was gone. Bulldozers had hastily scraped the Parade Ground flat to accommodate the ceremony. Parachute canopies still hung in the branches of the trees around the ground.

No representatives of the 34th Infantry Regiment were present. They had left a week earlier. The 503rd PRCT was there, all three parachute infantry battalions, and the support units, the paratroopers wearing jump coveralls.

As MacArthur approached, Colonel George M. Jones stepped forward. He saluted, and stated, “Sir, I present to you Fortress Corregidor.”

MacArthur gave a brief speech. He told the paratroopers their recapture of Corregidor was “one of the boldest and most daring feats in military history.” He then turned to Colonel Jones and said, “I see the old flagpole still stands. Have your troops hoist the colors to its peak and let no enemy ever haul them down.”

To the notes of a bugle playing *To the Colors*, the flag slowly rose to the top of the flagpole, a ship’s mast. It was bent, with twisted rigging and a rope ladder tied to the mast top. The ceremony complete, MacArthur departed.

Six days later, on March 8, the 503rd PRCT departed Corregidor. They boarded LCIs at Black Beach, then traveled to Mariveles and back to Mindoro. On April 7 the 503rd was committed to combat again, reinforcing the 40th Infantry Division on Negros Island. Originally scheduled for another combat jump, which was canceled, the 503rd PRCT was inserted amphibiously. It spent the rest of the war on Negros, at one point battling remnants of the IJA’s 2nd Raiding Brigade, an airborne unit.

The 34th Infantry Regiment, as part of the 24th Infantry Division, landed on Mindanao on April 17. It participated in an intense campaign there, moving from Parang on Mindanao’s western coast to the capital Davao on the east. It remained on Mindanao for the rest of the war, moving to occupation duty in Japan upon the war’s end.

The 151st Infantry Regiment departed the Manila Bay islands upon completion of their assignments. Its 1st Battalion was withdrawn from Corregidor in mid-April, being relieved by the 2nd Battalion, which itself departed in mid-May. The regiment, part of the 38th Infantry Division, moved to Luzon in May, attacking the Shimbu Line, east and south of Manila, before moving into southern Luzon. It remained in the Philippines, on mop-up duties in southeastern Luzon, until the Japanese surrender in August 1945.

Only one Japanese unit came out of the Manila Bay islands campaign intact, the composite unit holding Carabao Island, withdrawn around the time Corregidor fell to defend Ternate. When Ternate fell, 350 of the 1,200 Japanese were killed. The rest escaped into rough, hilly ground southeast of Ternate, with only their personal weapons and what they could carry on

The port of Manila in summer 1945, crowded with ships. Access to the Philippine capital was the payoff for the repossession of Corregidor, Bataan, and the other fortified Manila Bay islands. (AC)

their backs. A few made it to the Shimbu Line. The rest were hunted down by Filipino guerrillas and US forces in the area. Those that did make it to the Shimbu Line were wiped out when the US attacked it in May 1945. It is doubtful many members of Carabao's garrison survived until the Japanese surrender in August.

There were some Japanese survivors of the campaign. Perhaps 50 managed to reach shore after abandoning Corregidor. All of those reaching Caballo would have died when it was taken, and those who reached Bataan would have been in enemy-held territory, with the indigenous Filipinos against them. How many survived to the end of the war is unknown. However, at war's end 20 holdouts on Corregidor finally surrendered, the only known survivors of the Japanese garrison except for the handful taken prisoner.

The campaign to take the four islands, although small, was significant. Success permitted maritime access to Manila; but the capture of the Philippine capital and its port had less impact on the drive on Japan than many later commentators claimed. Those supply routes ran across the Central Pacific to Ulithi, and then from there to Okinawa. Although forces in the Philippines would have been used in the planned invasion of Japan, they would have been relocated to Okinawa prior to the landings, and supplied from the Central Pacific route, bypassing Manila.

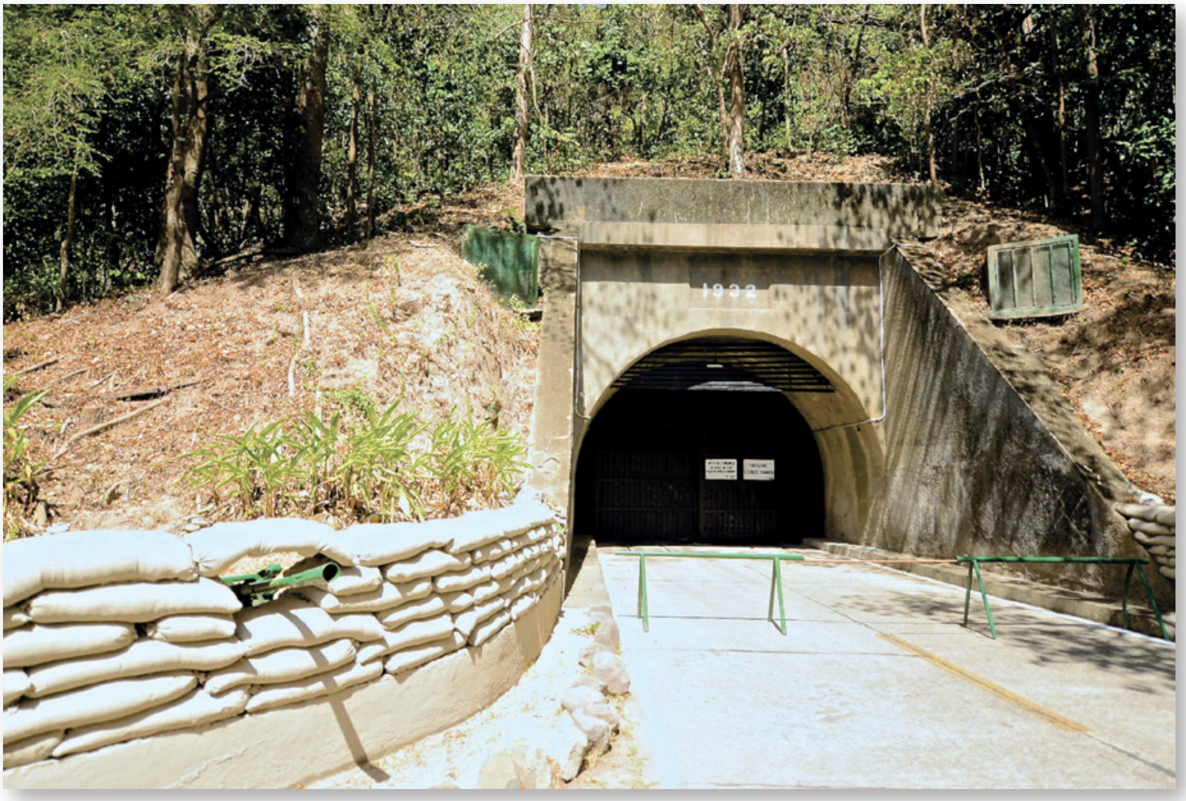
Yet Manila was critical for future operations in the Philippines from May through to the end of the war. It was the Philippines' finest port and Luzon's transportation network radiated out from the capital. Having the port of Manila available simplified campaign logistics. It also simplified supplying Manila, a city with a population of over 1 million people.

Without port access to Manila, supplies to feed its civilian population and rebuild the ruined city had to come from Lingayen Gulf or Subic Bay. This required a 110-mile drive from Lingayen or a 77-mile journey from Subic over narrow winding mountain roads in 2½-ton trucks—a logistical nightmare. Failure could have led to famine. As a result of repossessing the Rock, Liberty ships could unload 10,000 tons of cargo directly into Manila. It made a big difference.

THE BATTLEFIELD TODAY

The United States armed forces abandoned forts Mills, Hughes, Drum, and Frank after World War II ended. Following Philippine independence in 1946, control of the islands on which they were located was transferred to the Philippine government. Today all four fall under the jurisdiction of Cavite. For years afterward these forts remained abandoned and neglected. The buildings were left as they were when the war ended, and looters allowed to strip them of metal fittings left there.

The islands, especially Corregidor, became a magnet for veterans of the Pacific War and their families in the postwar years. Surviving US and Filipino veterans who fought there in 1942 and 1945 came to revisit their wartime experiences. The few surviving Japanese veterans who had fought on Corregidor and visited postwar were either among the 40 survivors of the



Today, tourism forms an important part of Corregidor's economy. Some locations on the island involved in the fighting have been restored. This is the eastern entrance to Malinta Tunnel as photographed in 2017. (DVDIS)

1945 battle or were among those captured in the 1942 Japanese invasion of Corregidor who survived until war's end. Families of those who had died fighting for the islands came from all three nations.

Today the islands, especially Corregidor, have become tourist attractions and hold war memorials. The Philippine government runs Corregidor as a park. At the highest point on Topside is the Pacific War Memorial, built by the US Government to honor US and Filipino soldiers who participated in World War II. It was completed in 1968. At the opposite end of Corregidor at Tail End is the Filipino Heroes Memorial, built by the Philippine government to honor Filipino warriors throughout history. Between them is the Japanese Garden of Peace, a memorial funded by the Japanese government. A Shinto shrine, it commemorates the Japanese who died in combat on the island.

Most of the battlefield is unrestored. Parts of Malinta Tunnel have been reopened and can be visited by the public. Many of the side tunnels remain barred to the public. They are in a state of decay and in danger of collapse. While time has scoured away many markers of the battles fought there, much remains. The big guns and mortars of Fort Mills were too heavy to remove and now comprise the largest collection of 20th-century US coastal artillery remaining. Many of the caves and tunnels remain. Visitors can hire guides to show them the battlefield.

There are no monuments on the other three islands. Caballo is currently occupied by the Philippine Navy. It is off-limits to civilians. The prewar structures on the island have been abandoned and are in a state of decay. El Fraile island is completely abandoned, largely stripped of its metal save for the disabled turrets and 14in. guns. A navigation light was placed on it in 2001. Boats can be hired to take tourists to visit the concrete battleship. Carabao Island is almost totally abandoned. An afterthought during the campaign, it remains a tourist afterthought today. Only unauthorized scrap metal collectors visit the island.

FURTHER READING

There are several excellent accounts of the capture of Corregidor by Rock Force that have appeared in the last 40 years. In my opinion the two best are *Corregidor: The Rock Force Assault, 1945* by E. M. Flanagan, originally published by Presidio Press in 1988, and *Rock Force: The American Paratroopers Who Took Back Corregidor and Exacted MacArthur's Revenge on Japan*, by Kevin Maurer, published by Dutton Caliber, 2020.

Both are fast-paced accounts of the action, written by knowledgeable authors. Flanagan was a World War II veteran who served in airborne units during that war and retired a lieutenant-general in 1978, before turning to writing airborne history. Maurer is an award-winning journalist who specializes in military history, especially accounts of elite troops.

I liked both books, yet felt both focused too much on the 503rd PRCT's role in the battle—understandable given the interests of both authors. The roles of the US Navy and USAAF were largely overlooked. Additionally, the contribution of the 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment and that of the 151st Infantry Regiment were minimized, due to the focus on the airborne forces. Here, I have tried to expand the story to include these elements.

The works below represent the main sources I drew upon for this book. It is not a complete list, but includes US Army histories and studies, and books on the USAAF and US Navy contributions.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AA	antiaircraft
APD	High speed transport (converted destroyer or destroyer escort)
AT	antitank
CEB	Combat Engineering Battalion
IJA	Imperial Japanese Army
IJN	Imperial Japanese Navy
JASCO	Joint Assault Signal Company
L-Day	Landing Day
LCI(L)	Landing Craft Infantry Large
LCI(R)	Landing Craft Infantry (Rocket)
LCM	Landing Craft Mechanized
LCM(R)	Landing Craft Mechanized (Rocket)
LCP	Landing Craft Personnel
LCS(L)	Landing Craft Support Large
LCVP	Landing Craft Vehicle and Personnel
LSM	Landing Ship Medium
LST	Landing Ship Tank
OP	observation post
PIR	Parachute Infantry Regiment
PRCT	Parachute Regimental Combat Team
PT	Patrol Torpedo (boat)
RCT	Regimental Combat Team
SAP	Support Air Party
SNLF	Special Naval Landing Force
SWPA	Southwest Pacific Area
TG	Task Group
USAAF	United States Army Air Forces
USNR	United States Navy Reserve

Image credit abbreviations

The following abbreviations indicate the sources of the illustrations used in this volume:

AC	Author's collection
DVIDS	Defense Visual Information Distribution Service
LOC	Library of Congress, Washington DC
USAF	United States Air Force
US Army	United States Army
USNHHC	United States Naval Heritage and History Command

L-Day on Corregidor. This aerial shot of the island taken on February 16, 1945 shows Corregidor during the last of the preinvasion aerial bombardment. (US Army)

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OSPREY PUBLISHING
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
Kemp House, Chawley Park, Cumnor Hill, Oxford OX2 9PH, UK
29 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, Ireland
1385 Broadway, 5th Floor, New York, NY 10018, USA
E-mail: info@ospreypublishing.com
www.ospreypublishing.com

OSPREY is a trademark of Osprey Publishing Ltd

First published in Great Britain in 2023
This electronic edition published in 2023 by Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

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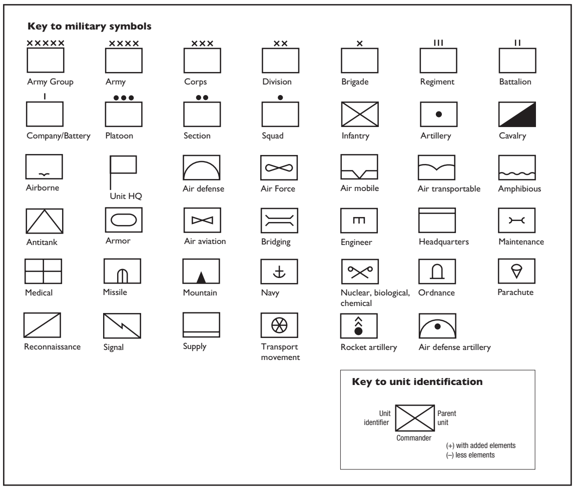
A catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: PB 9781472854698; eBook 9781472854681; ePDF 9781472854704; XML 9781472854674

Maps by Bounford.com
3D BEVs by Paul Kime
Index by Alison Worthington
Typeset by PDQ Digital Media Solutions, Bungay, UK


Key to military symbols
Army Group
Army
Corps
Division
Brigade
Regiment
Battalion
Company/Battery
Platoon
Section
Squad
Infantry
Artillery
Cavalry
Airborne
Unit HQ
Air defense
Air Force
Air mobile
Air transportable
Amphibious
Antitank
Armor
Air aviation
Bridging
Engineer
Headquarters
Maintenance
Medical
Missile
Mountain
Navy
Nuclear, biological, chemical
Ordnance
Parachute
Reconnaissance
Signal
Supply
Transport movement
Rocket artillery
Air defense artillery
Key to unit identification
Unit identifier
Parent unit
Commander
(+) with added elements
(–) less elements

Artist's note

Readers can discover more about the work of illustrator Johnny Shumate at the below website:

https://johnnyshumate.com

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Dedication

To Tim Huete, another Ricochet friend. It was good meeting you. You may be a jarhead, but you know Corregidor and the battle fought there in 1945.

Front cover main illustration: US paratroopers take out Captain Akira Itagaki's command staff on Topside. (Johnny Shumate)

Title page photograph: US paratroopers clearing out Japanese troops on Topside, Corregidor Island. (US Army)